

ADVENTURES ON THE HIGH SEAS

ROMANTIC INCIDENTS & PERILS OF
TRAVEL, SPORT, AND EXPLORATION
THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

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"ADVENTURES ON THE HIGH MOUNTAINS"

"WILL OF THE DALES," &c. &c.

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE

NOT all the races that have won renown by their daring adventures on the ocean can, perhaps, be credited with a passion for the sea. Those adventurous traders, the old Phœnicians, are said to have hugged the shores of the Mediterranean, and to have ventured as little as possible out of sight of land. It was the pursuit of wealth and the thirst for discovery which led the mercantile Venetians of the Middle Ages and the Spanish and Portuguese explorers to brave the dangers of the deep, rather than a love of its salt breezes and rolling waves. Yet among them, as among the old Vikings, and the Dutchmen of later times, not less ready on occasion to fight than to trade, and the hardy mariners from British ports and from harbours across the Atlantic, have been many of those true lovers of the sea to whom the sailor's life, if the most dangerous of avocations, is also the most alluring. These are ready to exclaim, with Childe Harold—

Once more upon the waters ! yet once more !
And the waves bound beneath me as a steed
That knows his rider. Welcome to their roar !
Swift be their guidance, wheresoe'er it lead,

Though the strain'd mast should quiver as a reed,
And the rent canvas fluttering strew the gale.

PREFACE

Of Adventures on the High Seas the tales are endless, and in these chapters are gathered stories, as true as they are thrilling, of most various character: stories of the exploits, the achievements, the failures, and the disasters of honest mariners and plundering corsairs, of peaceful merchantmen and ships of war, of the voyager for pleasure and the intrepid explorer; with many a tale of storm, of fire at sea, of fog, or frozen ocean and wandering iceberg, of hunger and thirst and exposure, and of splendid rescue by stout-armed and stouter-hearted lifeboatmen.

The author desires to acknowledge with thanks the kindness of the authors and publishers who have granted him permission to make use of their works: Mr. N. H. Bishop, Mr. Antonio D. Lussick, Mr. David Douglas, and Mr. T. Fisher Unwin.

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ADVENTURES ON THE HIGH SEAS

CHAPTER I

A WHALER'S TERRIBLE EXPERIENCES

The whaling disasters of 1836—The *Dee* of Aberdeen—Unfavourable weather in Baffin's Bay—Winter sets in—No outlet from the ice—Attempts to find a passage—Allowance of food reduced—Frozen in—The *Dee* in a very dangerous place—Huge icebergs—Shocks and crushes—Two days of terrible exposure—A dock cut for the *Dee*—Dock breaks in—A second basin cut—Collapses also—Continuous night begun—The *Thomas* breaks up—Excellent conduct of the men—Disease—Only fifteen sound men on the *Dee*—Death of captain and others—*Dee* drifts southward—Colder weather—The open sea!—A dreadful voyage—*Dee* reaches Aberdeen—Forty-six deaths.

AMONGST the most thrilling of sea narratives may always be reckoned those which tell of a wintering in the Polar seas, with its dangers and sufferings. There are very few stories more remarkable than those of the great Arctic explorers—a Frobisher, a Franklin, a Nansen—and certainly few that have been more widely read. No one can fail to be interested in the doings, and an admirer of the pluck, of these famous navigators. And there are other Arctic heroes, humbler perhaps, and unknown to the world at large, but whose story hardly

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less deserves to be told. Conspicuous among these undistinguished but still gallant seamen are the whalers who every year ply their hazardous occupation in the northern oceans, and who in times not so long gone by were still more numerous. No finer fellows ever sailed a ship than the sturdy whale-fishers of our northern and eastern coasts.

Few misfortunes in the ice-bound regions have more keenly agitated the country than those met with by the *Dee*, Aberdeen whaler, and her companions the *Norfolk*, the *Advice*, and the *Grenville Bay*, in the years 1836-7. The *Dee* was commanded by Captain Gamblin, with a crew of thirty-three men and officers. The ship was fortunate enough to carry a surgeon of an excellent type, Mr. Littlejohn. At Stromness, in the Orkneys, sixteen more hands were shipped, and then the *Dee* was steered for Davis Strait and the whaling district, which was reached on May 15th.

The preparations for the commencement of the fishing were considerably interfered with by unfavourable weather; and besides this, icebergs began to appear, greatly hindering navigation. This state of things continued for two or three weeks, the weather not improving, and the icebergs becoming ever more numerous. No whales were seen as yet, though by this time latitude 66° N. had been reached, and the vessel was headed for North-East Bay and the Frow Islands. It being found impossible to make progress towards the west, as Captain Gamblin had desired, the course was changed to north-east, and after nearly a week of fairly good sailing, the open waters of the north were reached. By this time the *Dee* had eleven other vessels for company.

The first whale was secured in Pond's Bay, an inlet on the western shore of Baffin's Bay, and soon the fish ap-

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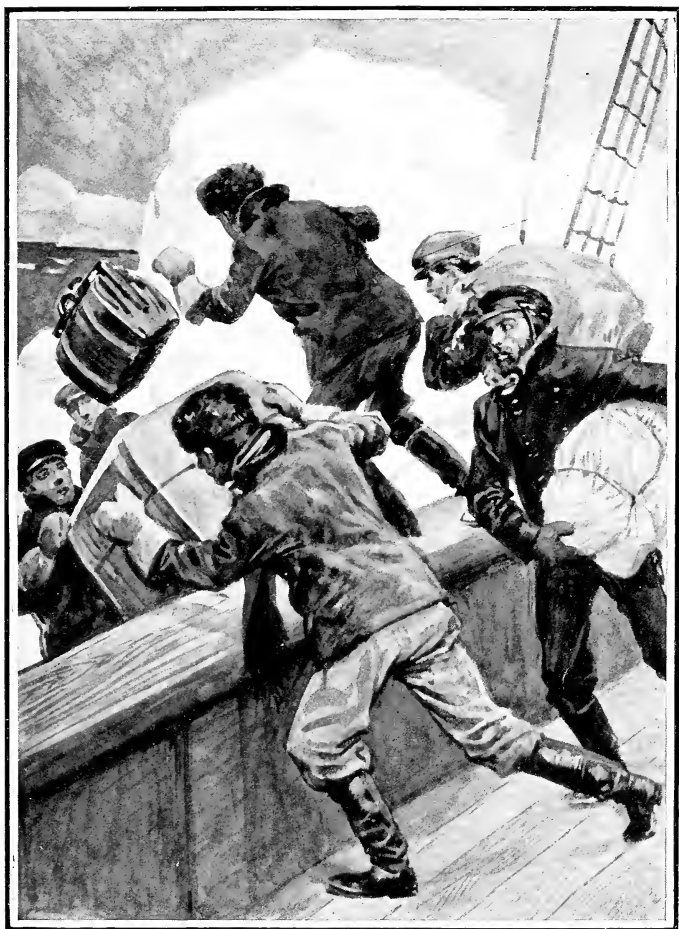
peared in plenty. No great amount of success fell to the *Dee*, but some of the other whalers made extraordinary catches. The season was now, however, somewhat advanced—it was by this time the month of September—and winter seemed to be setting in early. Already the ice was beginning to be troublesome, and Captain Gamblin determined to start for home. So far there had been nothing much out of the usual course of whaling experiences.

But Gamblin was presently a good deal perturbed by a report from the captain of the *Grenville Bay*, a ship he fell in with, to the effect that, so far as could be ascertained, there was no outlet from the Polar Sea. Another vessel, the *Norfolk*, now joined the company, and the three skippers resolved to keep together, so far as they might be able. The master of the *Dee*, fearing that his stock of provisions might not hold out through the long winter, should it be their ill-fortune to be ice-bound, put his men on reduced allowance. It had been the passage to the east that the *Grenville Bay* had attempted in vain, and accordingly the three captains now tried that to the north, and in due course a point as high as 75° was reached. Leaving the neighbourhood of Cape Melville, where the ice was becoming too troublesome, an attempt was made to wear south, and with difficulty latitude 71° was attained. By the end of September the whalers had fallen in with two more vessels, the *Advice* and the *Thomas*, both of Dundee. Strenuous efforts were at once made to find a clear passage out, but to no purpose. It was ascertained, moreover, that many other ships had been in the same plight, no fewer than eight anchor marks being observed on the ice in different spots. The efforts to escape from the ice-bound sea were redoubled.

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The only piece of open water now to be seen stretched away to northward, strange to say, and, after a conference, the five skippers resolved to steer in that direction once more. The weather became wretched and the vessels had to be anchored to huge pieces of ice for safety. By this time it had become certain that the winter would have to be spent out in the frozen seas, and the allowance of provisions to the men was still further reduced. All that was left to the captains was to seek the best available place for a winter station, and the ships moved away for that purpose. A calm came on, however, and the vessels were frozen in, within sight of each other. The position was the mouth of Baffin's Bay, in latitude 73°, or thereabouts. The day was October 8th, 1836. The ice was almost at once strong enough to admit of the men passing from one ship to another.

Unfortunately for the *Dee*, to which vessel we may now give our chief attention, the spot where she lay seemed to be subject to special disturbances below the surface, and the dangers from the movements of the ice were consequently greater than those that threatened the companion vessels. The result was an increase in the anxieties and sufferings of her crew. Indeed, as it happened, the men of the *Dee* were fated to undergo greater hardships than the rest of the whalers, and their peculiar difficulties began from this time. A main cause of trouble was the scarcity of fuel, and no coal was used save that needed for the bare cooking operations. Exercises of all kinds had to be invented to keep the sailors warm, amongst them being the unshipping of the rudder and the unbending of the sails, all of no actual use, of course. But useful or useless, such things had to be done or the men would have frozen. Still worse, the beds grew



ALMOST NIPPED IN THE ICE

The crews were alarmed by two frightful grinding shocks in quick succession, and pell-mell they hurried overboard, taking with them anything portable they could lay their hands on.



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terribly damp, and in spite of themselves the poor fellows were unable to keep the heat in their shivering bodies.

The frost continued very severe, yet, oddly enough, the ice about the *Dee* remained loose, and the captain was constantly in fear lest his ship should be crushed by the grinding floes. Huge icebergs, too, drifted past, of themselves a source of dread to the whalers. At last even this vessel was frozen in and the crush began. At times the masses of ice piled themselves all round the craft till they reached above the hull. Ominous cracks began to be heard and several crushes took place. Everything that could be done was done to strengthen the timbers. Strong beams were put across the after part of the vessel, and use was made even of the casks, which were ingeniously arranged across the hold so as to help in resisting the crushing force without, a clever notion on the part of the officers.

The step was taken none too soon. On October 20th the crew were alarmed by two frightful grinding shocks in quick succession, and pell-mell they fled out of their ship to the ice, hastily carrying with them whatever portable thing they could lay hands on—provisions, beds, clothing, chests, bags. For two days did the luckless fellows remain in that terrible situation. “Without fire, or shelter from the biting elements, the crew lay on the ice, gazing on their reeling and groaning vessel, while around them were extended vast fields of ice, studded with icebergs towering to the clouds, and threatening destruction to all that came in the way of their motions.” All this while the other whalers, at a distance, experienced nothing especially alarming.

Unexpectedly lanes now opened in the ice—a very bad sign. The men went on board again, with a view to

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securing the rest of their provisions. But a stampede instantly followed, the crush suddenly coming with a greater shock than any previous one. Another spell of exposure and suffering on the ice, and then the crew managed to get the *Dee* into an open piece of water. Once more they went on board, but so weak were they that they could scarce carry their belongings thither.

Captain Gamblin now bethought him of another plan, to cut out a clear place for the ship, a sort of dock, in fact, in which she might float uninjured by the ice around. The method adopted for the making of the dock was this. The point of a long and heavy ice-saw was driven by sheer force through the ice, something after the fashion of pile-driving, by repeated blows on the head of the instrument. Once through, the saw was moved up and down by the exertions of the men, its own weight or an extra weight attached to the point helping to carry it downwards. A piece of the ice was thus cut completely round, and the loose portion lifted out of the way. The hole was constantly enlarged till at length a basin big enough to float the vessel was formed. But it was terrible work for the poor fellows. Standing constantly in the water, as they were, their feet were shockingly frost-bitten, and they had to be rubbed long and laboriously with snow to save them at all. The crew of the *Dee* were helped in the dock-making by volunteers from the *Grenville Bay*. In spite of all difficulties the saws were kept well at work, and at length the ship swam safely in her own basin.

Another heavy task for the men was that of fetching, from a distance of three miles, ice from the nearest berg. This ice was fresh, and it was melted down for water, the stored stock of which was running low. The labour of bringing the ice from such a distance, over the roughest of

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tracks, was severe in the extreme ; and, moreover, the men were in danger of being attacked by bears, of which several were now seen, and there was more than one narrow escape. Unfortunately none of the animals could be secured.

Thus miserably the month of October wore away. Yet, as a matter of fact, and looked at by the light of their after experiences, the ultimate survivors were of opinion that up to the beginning of November they had been in fairly good case. And certainly there was far worse in store for the poor fellows. First, their comparative comfort at that time was rudely disturbed by the sudden breaking in of the ice upon their dock, and the labour, harder than before even, had all to be gone through again. Meanwhile the supply of fuel had come to an end, and one of the boats had to be broken up to get the wherewithal to cook the scanty allowance of food. "A bear and two foxes were seen, but made their escape, to the great disappointment of the men, who longed to taste fresh food. What a delicacy even fox flesh would have been, may be conceived from the fact, that the tails of the whales on board were cooked and eaten with great relish by the men."

November 15th arrived, and for the first time the sun did not rise above the horizon. The long, long Arctic night had begun. For many weeks—nay, the time might be reckoned by months—the whalers would have to endure the cold and darkness of those high latitudes. The captain about this time gave to each of his crew a yard of stout canvas, to be made into shoes, this additional protection for the feet proving a great comfort. But the general health of the men was beginning to give much anxiety. "Coughs, swelled limbs, and general debility, with small red discolorations on the skin, sharp pains and stiffness, were the common symptoms."

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The *Thomas*, one of the companion vessels, suddenly heeled over one day, under pressure of the ice—a fatal catastrophe. Within a short time the ship broke up completely, the crew on the ice suffering fearfully before they could be carried on board the other ships. Two of the crew died actually on the ice, from the exposure. It was fortunate that it was found possible to get out the provisions and other stores from the *Thomas* before she went quite to pieces. The men were divided among the other vessels, and the food apportioned correspondingly. But the work of removing the goods, which was undertaken by the crews of the *Dee* and the *Advice*, was very severe, and the whole company of sailors was much disheartened by the deaths, the first that had happened amongst them.

It was, in fact, the exposure to the wet and cold during the three days spent in clearing the wreck of the *Thomas* that brought on the severe illness that now attacked nearly all the men. Scurvy, always a dreaded disease under such conditions, began to run riot among the different crews, and by the middle of December more than a score were down with it on board the *Dee*, most of them so ill that they had to keep to their beds. The Christmas was signalled by the cutting down still further of the daily ration, and the New Year was a time of despondency, many of the men realising now that they would never see their homes again. The doctor did everything in his power to alleviate the sufferings of those down with scurvy, but he could not work miracles. The only cure was fresh meat and vegetables, and these, of course, could not be had.

Hitherto the conduct of the men had been excellent. Now they went in a body to Captain Gamblin to ask for

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a more satisfying allowance. The skipper, willing as he was to grant their demands, thought it prudent to husband his stock of provisions, and told his men so. He added that they could, of course, take what they wished by force, yet he trusted they would remain as well-behaved as heretofore. To their great credit, the sailors refrained from any act of insubordination, and as a reward for their good conduct the captain doled out to each a little additional meal, a thing that caused a rejoicing out of all proportion to the smallness of the gift, so severe had the privations become. On January 6th the sky grew brilliantly bright, to the delight of all; the sun was heralding his own return, so to speak.

We may pass quickly over the next few weeks. Day by day the sickness became more rife and more severe; their sufferings grew worse; deaths came quickly one after another. Then, most serious blow of all, Captain Gamblin himself, who had hitherto borne up and done his work splendidly, fell so seriously ill that he could no longer manage the ship, and the chief mate had to assume command. He at once took the precaution to reef the top-sails, fearing lest he should be left without sufficient men to perform the task when they should get out once more to the open sea, if ever that good fortune should be theirs. As it was, only fifteen men were equal to the duty.

On January 16th the sun appeared for the first time—a joyful sight to the captain and his men. But the former was not to see many more sunrises, poor fellow. On February 3rd, to the intense grief of his crew, the worthy master of the *Dee* died. His was the sixth death that had occurred among the ship's company.

By this time, according to observations made, the vessel had drifted some degrees to the south, actually from

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latitude 73° to 69° . And the drifting was still going on so that before long the *Dee* was in latitude 67° , and presently as far south as 63° . It might naturally be expected that the cold would now be less severe, but the experience of the whalers was quite otherwise. The temperature fell to a point so low that no liquid could be kept from freezing, and there were huge icicles within six feet of the fire. Disease, weakness, and death at last reduced the number of capable hands on board the *Dee* to six.

The worst had certainly come to the poor wretches imprisoned in the northern ice. A change was at hand for them. Day by day they were drifting southward, the other vessels following, but at a slower rate. Seeing that he might any day expect to get out clear, the mate of the *Dee* sent to the *Grenville Bay* for help to navigate the ship. But the captain had not a man to spare, most of his own crew being down with illness. The *Advice* and the *Norfolk* were too far back.

At last, after her terrible imprisonment of more than five months, the *Dee* floated out into the open waters and was once more free. With rejoicing hearts the mate and his crew turned their course homewards, cheered by the prospect of a speedy return to their native land and their friends. Alas! they little knew what was in store for them. Few of them were destined to see Scotland and their dear ones again. The scurvy began to rage more furiously than ever, and notwithstanding that the winds were entirely favourable, and that consequently rapid progress towards home was being made, the deaths increased to a terrible degree. In the course of about a month no fewer than twenty of the crew of the *Dee* fell victims to disease and exhaustion.

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There were also disappointments of a different kind, even at the very last stages of their long voyage. A sail was seen, but to their great grief the whalers were unable to attract attention. Then a fishing-vessel was spoken, and help earnestly besought, but the smack went off and left the hapless sailors unaided. The fishermen no doubt dreaded some pestilence on board the *Dee*.

The end of their troubles was, however, at hand. That same evening a Dundee barque came to their assistance, and her captain was horrified to find that only three of the whaler's men were able to go aloft. Nothing could exceed his kindness. The ship was carried to Stromness, and then to her own port, Aberdeen, which was reached after an absence of over thirteen months.

The three companion vessels all reached Scotland in safety, the crew in each case having undergone its share of hardships and sufferings. Strange to say, though the Government had sent out ships in search of the missing whalers, not one of them was met with.

Many are the harrowing stories that have been told from time to time of the terrible experiences of our whaling crews, but the disasters of the years 1836 and 1837 will long stand out conspicuous for their lengthened horrors. And not for those alone; the bravery of the crews involved, their readiness to suffer and to do, and their excellent behaviour all through, will always be remarkable, even among British crews.

CHAPTER II

THE FATE OF THE *WAGER*

Anson commands an expedition against the Spanish possessions—Start from the Isle of Wight—Cape Horn rounded—The fleet scattered—The *Wager* missing—*Wager* wrecked—Riotous conduct of the crew—A desolate and inhospitable country—Terrible scenes on board the wreck—The mutineers also go ashore—Great difficulty in getting provisions ashore—Serious differences between captain and men—Violent quarrels—A midshipman shot by the captain—Crew arrest the captain on a charge of murder—Long-boat prepared—Eighty men embark, and leave behind the captain and nineteen others—Sufferings from famine by those left behind—An attempt to reach Juan Fernandez—Disastrous expedition—Four men have to be left on the desert coast—A bargain with an Indian canoe owner—Six of the *Wager* men make off with the canoe—Five survivors—Dreadful sufferings—Byron's experiences—Another bargain for a canoe—Landed on Chiloe Island—Kindness of the people—Spanish prisoners—Return to England—Only four survivors—Fate of the eighty deserters.

ON the 18th of September, 1740, a large fleet set sail from St. Helen's in the Isle of Wight with a commission to harry the Spanish colonies and make matters as unpleasant for them as possible. A better commander for this purpose than Anson could not have been found, and his name has come down to us not only as an intrepid leader, but also for the invaluable narrative of his voyagings and discoveries.

The fleet, though numerically strong, had its weak points, and the weakest appears to have been the *Wager*. Without following the details of the voyage, it may be

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noted that Anson touched at Madeira, crossed over to South America, then coasted round Cape Horn into the Pacific. By this time his fleet had become somewhat scattered, but the island of Juan Fernandez had been appointed as a rendezvous, where the different vessels should meet again. As a matter of fact, before the appointed spot was reached, all the ships had come together except the *Wager*, an old and almost worn-out Indiaman, the least efficient of the Commodore's fleet, commanded by Captain Cheap. The adventures of the *Wager's* company form one of the most striking portions of the whole narrative of the expedition, and it is to this ship we devote the present chapter.

Captain Cheap had on board his vessel a considerable number of guns and a quantity of war stores generally, and he was consequently very anxious to fall in with the rest of the fleet, to join in the attack on Valdivia which Anson intended to make. But the first of a long, indeed an almost unparalleled, succession of misfortunes came when the skipper fell down one of the ship's ladders, dislocating his shoulder. The *Wager* was on a lee shore at the time, and so crazy was her condition that it was impossible to keep her off the rocks. In spite of all efforts, the vessel was driven ashore, and struck a sunken reef; she shipped a good deal of water, and at length grounded some hundred and fifty yards from the land, between two little islands. She did not immediately break up, but held together long enough to enable a good proportion of the provisions and other stores to be removed; indeed, there would have been ample time to save them all had discipline prevailed.

Although many of the men were down with scurvy, and others almost prostrate with the labours and hard-

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ships they had undergone, there was yet a large contingent that grew riotous and demoralised. It was, in truth, a time of dread and horror, the sea breaking furiously over the stranded hulk and washing off one poor wretch after another. Here and there a man went stark mad. A few words may be given from the graphic account furnished by one of the survivors, the Honourable Mr. Byron, a midshipman. A sailor, he says, was seen "stalking about the deck flourishing a cutlass over his head, and calling himself king of the country, and striking everybody he came near, till his companions, seeing no other security against his tyranny, knocked him down." Worse still, there were many who "grew very riotous, broke open every chest and box that was at hand, stove in the heads of casks of brandy and wine as they were borne up the hatchway, and got so drunk that some of them were drowned on board, and lay floating about the decks for days after." Not a few of the sailors in their drunken madness set to work to pillage the ship, laying hands on everything they could carry. Rarely had a scene of such riot and confusion been seen on board a ship of the Royal Navy.

At last Captain Cheap, failing to restore order, left the mutineers on board, and with his officers and the well-affected of his men went ashore. Next morning he sent back the boats, begging the rioters to leave the vessel and seek safety on land. He was fearful lest the ship should break up with all its living freight, so stormy was the weather. "But it seems their madness had not yet left them, for the boat not appearing to fetch them off so soon as they expected, they at last pointed a four-pounder, which was on the quarter-deck, against the hut where they knew the captain resided on shore, and fired two shots,

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which passed just over it." However, after much angry discussion, all were got ashore, and the stranded company were able to survey the place. "Whichever way we looked a scene of horror presented itself: on one side the wreck (in which was all we had in the world to support and subsist us), together with a boisterous sea; on the other the land did not wear a much more favourable appearance—desolate and barren, without sign of culture, we could hope to receive little other benefit from it than the preservation it afforded us from the sea. We had wet, cold, and hunger to struggle with, and no visible remedy against any of those evils." The shipwrecked took the land on which they stood to be part of the mainland of South America; they learnt later on that it was only an island off the west coast, and a hundred leagues or so north of the Strait of Magellan.

The task of getting the provisions and other goods from the wreck proved a most dangerous and difficult one in the tempestuous weather. It was rendered almost impossible by the continued bad conduct of the men, by their want of concert, and by their refusal to submit to discipline of any sort, with the result that not a little of the cargo was lost.

There now arose another fatal difference between the captain and his men. The former was bent on fitting up the boats and attempting to make the island of Juan Fernandez, the meeting-place appointed by the Commodore. The crew, on the other hand, were determined to sail in the contrary direction, back to Magellan's Strait, and then try to reach the coast of Brazil, whence they did not doubt they would sooner or later be able to find their way back to Europe. Theirs was, in truth, an extraordinary plan, and one that seemed on the face of it to be

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that of madmen. But the men deemed that every mile of their route would bring them nearer home, while the captain's plan would carry them even farther away from it. The quarrel between the men and the officers—for the latter as a body sided with Captain Cheap—grew day by day more bitter, and the ship's responsible authorities thought it prudent to keep a careful watch. In the end the commander was compelled to give way, or, at any rate, to appear to do so. Secretly he cherished the notion that, by the time all was ready for putting out to sea again, he would have recovered his lost authority, and so would be able to carry out his own plan. The work of lengthening the long-boat was proceeded with, but so great was the men's distrust of their officer that the breach between them was as far as ever from being healed.

Matters were brought to a crisis by an unfortunate incident. One of the midshipmen, a young fellow of the name of Cozens, had all along sided with the mutineers, if indeed he was not actually their leader. His insolence to the captain and others of his superiors grew unbearable, and he was the foremost in every act of turbulence and violence. Then, as there seemed to be mischief brewing of a more serious kind, and as Cozens was clearly looked on as the leader in the disturbance projected, the captain deemed it high time to resort to more severe measures. The scene that followed is described by Mr. Walter, the chaplain to the fleet. Cozens had interfered with the purser in the execution of his duty and had grossly insulted him, "just by the captain's tent, and was himself sufficiently violent; the purser, enraged by his scurrility and perhaps piqued by former quarrels, cried out 'a mutiny!' adding 'the dog has pistols!' and then himself fired a pistol at Cozens, which however missed him; but

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the captain, on the outcry and the report of the pistol, rushed out of his tent ; and, not doubting but that it had been fired by Cozens as the commencement of a mutiny, he immediately shot him in the head without further deliberation, and though he did not kill him on the spot, yet the wound proved mortal, and he died about fourteen days after."

This prompt though severe action on the part of Captain Cheap put an end for the time to any open rebellion on the part of the men, but the irritation among them was great, and it was not lessened by the discovery that the captain was still doing his best to thwart the plans for the expedition to the Strait of Magellan and the Brazils. A more daring step than any former one was now taken by the crew. They charged their commander with murder, and put him under arrest, declaring they would carry him back to England and there deliver him up to justice. The long-boat was prepared as for this purpose.

It was indeed time somebody departed. The stock of provisions was running very short, and the terrors of starvation were already looking the mariners in the face. Of the one hundred and thirty who had reached the land at least thirty had died, but there remained a hundred mouths to feed. At last all was ready for departure, the mutineers now owning no authority but their own. Into the long-boat and the cutter eighty men were crowded, the craft loaded almost to sinking point. Then came a dramatic surprise. Instead of taking with them the captain to be delivered to justice, they pushed off, leaving behind nearly the whole of the officers with a few men who still stood by their superiors. Astonishment struggled with dismay in the breasts of those thus

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deserted, as they stood on the shore watching the fast-disappearing boats. The departing crews had sarcastically given them three cheers as they pushed off. It was altogether an extraordinary episode.

Here, then, was Captain Cheap left with nineteen companions, officers and men. Fortunately the mutineers had left also two small boats, the yawl and the barge. The difficulty of keeping body and soul together soon became very serious. "A weed called slaugh, fried in the tallow of some candles we had saved, with wild celery, was our only fare, by which our strength was so much impaired that we could scarcely crawl." But one day a portion of the ship's hull became visible above water again, and the two boats proceeded thither in search of any provisions that might have escaped destruction. To the exceeding joy of the starving men some casks of beef and other food were found and placed on board the small boats to be carried ashore. Then, to their great dismay, a rough sea all at once rose upon them, and it was impossible to keep out the waves. The men sat close together round the boats to catch the water on their backs, and so prevent the swamping of the frail craft! All in vain; to save their lives the sailors were compelled to throw overboard the food which they had secured with so much trouble and at such risk, and of which they stood in such sore need. Night was at hand, and every man gave himself up for lost, deeming it impossible he could ever reach the land again in that howling tempest. It was only with untold difficulty they managed to run their boats into a calmer piece of water, between two reefs.

For four days they were forced to remain on these desolate rocks, cold, constantly drenched, and reduced to

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eat the very leather from their boots. However, some two months after the departure of the long-boat, and seven after the wreck of the *Wager*, Captain Cheap and his companions were able to embark in the yawl and the barge, and set their course northward, to reach Juan Fernandez, if it were possible by any effort to do so. And now began for them a time of hardship and danger, the like of which they had not yet experienced. One man was drowned by the foundering of the yawl, and the boat was lost altogether. This happened during the first week or two of their voyage. The barge was quite unequal to the carrying of the whole company, and the captain was compelled to pull to land and leave four of the men, marines, on the inhospitable shore. It was a heartrending scene, as the four poor fellows gave their more fortunate brethren a cheer as a send-off; and there can be little doubt that they perished miserably. For weeks the crew battled with the difficulties that beset them. Again and again the attempt was made to round the cape called Tres Montes; as often the boat was driven back. All on board grew so weak that at last they could struggle no more, and sadly they turned their course to go back to their island, which they had christened Wager Island, a name it still bears. This they succeeded in doing, after unheard-of difficulties, privations, and dangers. To go in detail over the story of their sufferings at this time would be but to weary the reader. It is sufficient to hint that "that dreadful and last resource of men in not much worse circumstances than ours, of consigning one man to death for the support of the rest, began to be mentioned in whispers!"

But that "last dreadful resource" was happily not needed. A party of Indians arrived in canoes, one of

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whom was able to speak a little Spanish, a language understood also by the surgeon. A bargain was struck with the chief to carry the *Wager* survivors to the nearest Spanish settlement, and presently eleven miserable men embarked with the natives, to coast along to the island of Chiloe. There was still hardly a morsel of food for the sufferers, and they were compelled to land now and then, in the hope of picking up something to assuage the torments of their stomachs. Captain Cheap seems to have behaved rather selfishly, and on one occasion, while he and others were on shore, six of the party suddenly made off with the boat, leaving the other five to their fate. These five men were, besides the captain, the lieutenant of marines, the surgeon, and two midshipmen, one of them the Mr. Byron to whom we owe one of the best accounts of the voyage.

Byron himself had a remarkable experience about this time. He had gone ashore with Captain Cheap to a native coast village. The middy was deserted by his superior officer and half dead with hunger. Byron would soon have succumbed in his neglected and miserable condition had not some women of the place, seeing his state, taken pity on him. They made a fire near the shivering fellow and covered him with garments while he slept. Moreover, for more than an hour the kindly creatures stood in the ice-cold water to catch fish for the dinner they prepared for him. Mr. Byron was almost beside himself with rage when the husband of the women, an old Indian, returned and savagely beat them for showing kindness to a stranger.

It has been said that the captain had exhibited a good deal of selfishness on more than one occasion. But is it to be marvelled at when we read such a description as

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this of the sufferings of the party at this time? "I could compare Captain Cheap's body to nothing but an ant-hill, with thousands of vermin crawling over about it; for he was now past attempting to rid himself in the least from this torment, as he had quite lost himself, not recollecting our names that were about him, or even his own. His beard was as long as a hermit's, that and his face being covered with train oil and dirt, from his sleeping, to secure them from theft, upon pieces of stinking seal. His legs were as big as mill-posts, though his body appeared to be nothing but skin and bone." Byron himself was often compelled to strip in the bitter frost and snow to clear himself of vermin. Mr. Elliot, the surgeon, died, leaving but four survivors.

The remainder of this remarkable story is soon told. Another canoe was procured, and after a long and difficult voyage the Indians landed the Englishmen on Chiloe, a Spanish settlement. Here their troubles were at an end. Nothing could exceed the kindness of the inhabitants; every house was open to the sufferers. The quantity of food the poor fellows managed to eat at that time was enormous. "It is amazing," says Byron, "that our eating to that excess we did, did not kill us; we were never satisfied, and used to take all opportunities, for months after, of filling our pockets when we were not seen, that we might get up two or three times in the night to cram ourselves."

This mighty and long-continued gorging did not, however, kill them off, and the four survivors were at length taken to Valparaiso, and thence to Santiago, where they stayed for some time as Spanish prisoners. At last they were put on board a French ship and carried to France. When, after an absence of five years, they reached

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British shores again, it is not surprising that their friends welcomed them as men from the dead.

It may be mentioned that after a strangely adventurous voyage round the southern end of the continent, and after in one way or another losing the greater portion of their number, a miserable remnant of the mutineers in the long-boat did reach the Brazilian coast; but few of them ever saw England again.

CHAPTER III

A FAMOUS MUTINY

Captain Cook and his followers—The *Bounty*, Lieutenant Bligh, sails for the Pacific—A long stay at Otaheite—A mutiny caused through commander's harshness—Bligh and eighteen others turned adrift in small boat—With difficulty Timor, and then England, reached by the castaways—Fletcher Christian chosen captain of the *Bounty*—The mutineers and the Otaheitans—Dissensions among the mutineers—Sixteen men remain behind at Otaheite—*Bounty* sails away, and is lost sight of—*Pandora* frigate sent from England in search—Reaches Otaheite—*Pandora* wrecked on the Great Barrier Reef—Inhumanity to the *Bounty* prisoners—The mutineers court-martialled—Discoveries on Pitcairn Island—A remarkable story—Description of the island and its inhabitants.

THE story of Captain Cook's wonderful voyages is, happily, still read in England. But the careers of some of Cook's officers and men, in many cases hardly less striking than his own, have received less attention than they deserve. To tell the story of one of these is the purpose of the present chapter.

It was in the year 1787, at which time the actual fate of Cook himself was hardly known in England, that the ship *Bounty* sailed from Spithead for the Pacific. The officer in charge was Lieutenant Bligh, who had already explored the same ocean in the company of the famous navigator. The *Bounty* carried a couple of expert gardeners chosen by the great botanist Sir Joseph Banks, a main object of the expedition being the carrying from

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the Pacific islands to the West Indies of the bread-fruit and other plants. These vegetables, which grew so well and were so useful in the Pacific, might, it was believed, thrive equally well in the tropical islands of the Atlantic. The crew of the *Bounty* consisted of forty-four persons, including the commander.

Wretched weather prevailed during the greater part of the voyage to Cape Horn, and the course of the ship had to be altered in the direction of Van Diemen's Land. When at last Otaheite was reached, after a cruise of twenty-seven thousand miles in all, the voyage had occupied ten months. Bligh made a very long stay in the island; in fact, he did not leave it till six months later. The natives, who had loved Captain Cook, were full of joy when another English ship arrived, and treated the men of the *Bounty* with extraordinary kindness and liberality. The sailors were allowed to go on shore and to indulge themselves as they pleased, a mistaken policy on the part of the lieutenant, as was afterwards seen. At length, however, the ship weighed anchor, and began a cruise among the other islands of the group.

And now begins the extraordinary part of the story of the *Bounty*, a story of actual happenings more strange than any imaginings from the pen of a writer of fiction. Lieutenant Bligh, to say the least of it, was what might be called a "brute," that is, he was harsh, obstinate, and self-willed, and very uncertain in his temper, if he was not disposed to actual cruelty. His men generally had a trying time of it with him, and of late for some reason he had given way more frequently to fits of temper, and many a sailor, whether officer or plain seaman, had felt the weight of the lieutenant's wrath. One of these, Fletcher Christian, who figures so largely in the sub-

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sequent doings, afterwards declared that for the last week or two he had "been living in hell." All the material for an outbreak was at hand. A small matter serves to fan a smouldering fire into a blaze, and so it was on this occasion.

Some cocoanuts were missing from the deck, and the commander, failing to find them after a search, turned in a rage on Christian, who happened to be the officer of the watch. Bligh, who had of late been styling the officers villains, and had stopped their grog, now beside himself with passion, cursed Christian and called him a hound. He further declared that as for the men before the mast, he would ere long make half of them throw themselves into the sea. Christian, a man of respectable family, and moreover a man of spirit, could stand his superior's tyranny and insolence no longer. He made up his mind to quit the vessel, and set about preparing a raft for the purpose, a fact known to the crew. Things were indeed in an electrical condition on board the vessel, and any skipper less blind and headstrong than Bligh would have seen that a storm was gathering.

During the succeeding night, as Christian was labouring at his raft, one of the crew set another thought working in his mind.

"Why not seize the ship at once?" the man whispered.

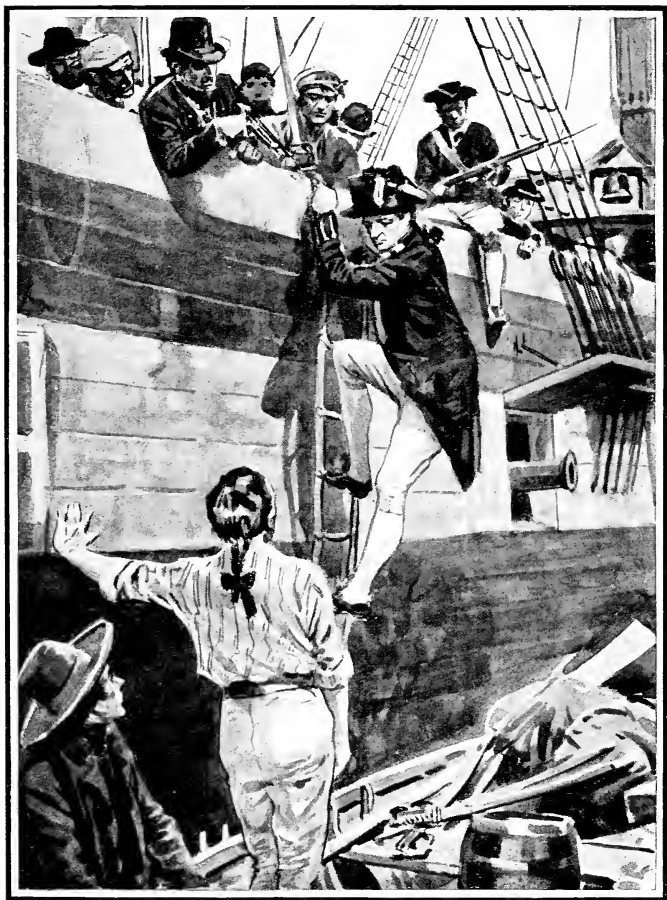
The notion, which instantly set Christian's brain on fire, was quickly carried through the ship's company, and a dramatic scene was witnessed in the grey of the early morning. Christian and two or three others suddenly made their appearance in the lieutenant's cabin, and before Bligh could defend himself—before he was fully awake even—he was seized, and his hands were tightly tied behind his back, and he was immediately hurried on

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deck. While this was going on, others of the mutineers had gone quietly but swiftly through the crew and bound all who were not inclined to join their party.

Things marched fast that morning. A boat was got ready, some food and clothing, with a few cutlasses, were thrown in, and then Bligh was bundled over the side of the ship, together with eighteen other men who held with him, and the luckless little group of nineteen souls was thrust off in that small open craft in the midst of the boundless Pacific. There remained on board the cruiser five-and-twenty mutineers, including three midshipmen, who, though they had shown no sympathy with the outbreak, were forcibly kept back to navigate the ship. "Huzza for Otaheite!" the fellows yelled, and by that the castaways in the boat knew what was in the minds of Christian and his adherents. It may be noted in passing that, for the most part, the mutineers included the very pick of the crew.

What a prospect for Lieutenant Bligh and his companions! The sailors with him begged him at once to steer for home. Home! Why, the nearest bit of land where any help could be had was the island of Timor, nearly four thousand miles away! As for England, it was more than four times that distance from them. A calculation showed that the provisions on board would admit, on a voyage to Timor, of an allowance to each man of no more than an ounce of bread and half a pint of water per day, even under the most favourable conditions possible. The men, ready to make the best of a bad job, consented to this, each binding himself solemnly to abide by the agreement. An attempt to land on one of the islands and bargain with the natives for bread-fruit and water was met by showers of stones, and the boat



CAST ADRIFT BY MUTINEERS

Bligh, with eighteen faithful seamen, was bundled into the boat in the midst of the boundless Pacific.

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was hastily pushed off, leaving one of its company dead.

The craft was but three-and-twenty feet in length, and its complement of eighteen men and their little store of provisions and clothing almost weighed it down to the water's level. It seemed beyond the bounds of possibility that such a shell should traverse a little-known ocean for 3600 miles in safety, and a novelist who should make it accomplish such a feat in his story would inevitably lay himself open to the charge of dragging in the miraculous. Nevertheless, the castaways did reach Timor, though so reduced that they resembled a company of skeletons rather than a crew of living men; in fact, notwithstanding the kindly treatment they found among the Dutch there, five of the men died. The other thirteen were in due time enabled to make their way back to England, where the story of the mutiny attracted universal attention, and made a great sensation. Lieutenant Bligh was raised to the rank of commander. It is probable his version of the tale would not have been corroborated by the mutineers themselves had they heard it.

But it is time to follow the fortunes of Fletcher Christian and his companions. After ridding themselves of their commander and those who sided with him, the rebel sailors chose Christian as their leader, and steered for the island of Toobouai, intending to settle there, but the natives showed anything but a friendly disposition, and a course was set for Otaheite again. Here the mutineers had to meet the queries of Tinah, the king of the island, who very naturally wanted to know what had become of Lieutenant Bligh and the rest. To blind Tinah the Englishmen concocted a story to the effect that the *Bounty* had luckily fallen in with Captain Cook, a

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piece of news that set the islanders rejoicing. The mutineers further asserted that Cook had kept back Bligh and a number of the crew to help him to make the settlement he was projecting, on another island not far away. Moreover, the famous navigator, they declared, had sent on the *Bounty* to Otaheite to fetch bread-fruit, pigs, goats, and so forth. The inhabitants could hardly contain themselves when they learnt that Captain Cook, their beloved friend and patron, was still living and was about to become a near neighbour of theirs. Provisions and other supplies were immediately forthcoming in plenty, and goats, hogs, cattle, poultry, and what not, were literally heaped on the men of the *Bounty*.

So far Christian had been marvellously successful, so much so, indeed, that he determined to try his luck once more on Toobouai. To that island he directed his course, his ship's company increased by the addition of twenty-four Otaheitans—men, women, and boys. The *Bounty* was beached on Toobouai, and preparations were made for building a fort. But soon there arose dissensions among the Englishmen, and Christian was unable to keep down the confusion and violence. Moreover, the islanders soon regretted the advent of the strangers; the poor savages were ill-treated and made to submit to a species of slavery galling in the extreme. When they turned again under this atrocious treatment they were killed without pity. Toobouai soon became too hot to hold the mutineers, and before long Christian carried off his ship and crew to Otaheite again. There all who preferred to stay were allowed to leave the vessel. They numbered sixteen in all, and the remainder, eight men besides Christian, weighed anchor once more and sailed away. From that time they were lost to the world. It

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was in September, 1789, that the *Bounty* left Matavai in Otaheite for the last time.

But in England the sensation caused by Bligh's report of the *Bounty* mutiny had by no means been without effect. A frigate, the *Pandora*, was fitted out for the Pacific, under the command of Captain Edwards, and reached Matavai Bay in the spring of 1791. Even before it came to anchor the vessel, to the surprise of Captain Edwards and his crew, was boarded by an Englishman. Presently a couple of midshipmen appeared, and all the men at once admitted that they had been of the *Bounty* company. One after another the rest of the Englishmen on the island came on board till fourteen had come. Two of the sixteen in Otaheite were reported to have run to hide in the mountains, and before long the news reached the coast that they had been killed by the savages of the interior.

For three months Edwards and his ship remained here. From the fourteen mutineers who gave themselves up he learnt the story of the navigations of the *Bounty* till its final departure with Christian and his eight companions. Believing that on one or other of the adjacent islands he should come across the missing mutineers, if not the ship itself, the captain carried out a careful search. It was all to no purpose; no trace of the missing sailors could be found, and at length the *Pandora* was steered for New Holland, as the island-continent of Australia was then called.

A sorry chapter in this strange, eventful history has now to be told. The *Pandora* unfortunately struck the Barrier Reef, that long stretch of coral formation which runs for twelve hundred miles along the east coast of Australia. The damage was so serious that the vessel

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filled almost immediately, and a terrible sight was witnessed. The crew, in mad confusion, endeavoured to save themselves, every man for himself. After a scene of wild struggle a few fortunate ones succeeded in gaining the shore. But when the roll-call was made, Captain Edwards found that no fewer than thirty-four of his ship's company had perished. As for the prisoners, their case was fearful indeed. All through the voyage they had been most inhumanely treated. "They were confined in a round-house, built on the after-deck on purpose, which could only be entered by a scuttle in the top about eighteen inches square. From this narrow prison they were never allowed to stir; and they were, over and above, heavily loaded with irons both at the wrists and ankles."

In this pitiful predicament were the fourteen miserable *Bounty* mutineers when the *Pandora* was wrecked, and, shocking to tell, the captain made no effort whatever to save them. It is a painful story, yet those who escaped all agreed in the account they gave afterwards. How any of the poor wretches escaped at all is a marvel, but somehow ten of them did so, and reached the shore almost without a rag to cover them. Even then their condition was scarcely bettered. They had escaped with their bare lives: that was all. No pity, no common feelings of humanity would seem to have had a place in the breasts of the crew of the *Pandora*. While they themselves were comfortably housed in tents made out of the ship's sails, the prisoners had no shelter, and to escape the burning rays of the sun they were fain to bury themselves up to their necks in the scorching sand. The effect was to cover their bodies with a mass of frightful scalding blisters.

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The remnant of the crew of the *Pandora*, with the ten prisoners, reached England, by way of Batavia in Java, and the mutineers were put upon their trial. Four of the men were found not guilty, the remaining six were sentenced to death; only three, however, were hanged. Midshipman Heywood was one of those found guilty, but there is reason to believe that he had not been a willing rebel. Bligh, who of course had been summoned as a principal witness, had an animus against the young fellow, and it was his evidence that mainly led to the condemnation of the midshipman. It is pleasant to relate that Mr. Heywood was pardoned, and lived to become a most honourable and distinguished officer.

Time passed away, and the *Bounty* mutiny was forgotten, save, perhaps, by the few who had actually figured in the doings away in the Pacific. But in 1808, twenty years afterwards, the news reached home that some Englishmen had been found by an American ship on Pitcairn, a lonely island in the Southern Pacific, and a place that was supposed to be uninhabited. These English-speaking islanders had stated themselves to be the descendants of Fletcher Christian and his companions of the *Bounty*. The news seemed incredible, and for a time little notice was taken of it; in fact, half a dozen more years rolled by, and the report of the American schooner had passed from men's minds. In 1814, however, there came intelligence that left no doubt as to the correctness of the American skipper's statements respecting the Pitcairn islanders.

A couple of British cruisers touched at the place, and as they were nearing the shore, the sailors were astounded to hear a voice shout across to them, "Won't you heave us a rope now?" On the beach stood a handsome young

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fellow, a white man, but much tanned by the sun, and clad in nothing but a loin-cloth and a hat of straw. The islander, a man of four-and-twenty, sprang on board.

“What is your name?” he was asked.

“Thursday October Christian,” was the somewhat odd reply, given, however, in perfect English. And it soon appeared that the young fellow was the son of Fletcher Christian, the mutineer of the *Bounty*, and an Otaheitan woman; that he was the first born on the island; and that he had received his singular names from the fact that he had been born on a Thursday in October. He was a finely-built black-haired man, standing fully six feet.

Here was a statement to stagger the captains of the two British frigates, and it was with some difficulty they could bring themselves to credit the story. But presently they found themselves speaking to another of the islanders, an aged man, who gave the name of Alexander Smith at first, but who then declared himself to be John Adams of the *Bounty*, and the sole survivor of Fletcher Christian’s band. Adams’s testimony soon convinced the visitors that they had happened upon a remarkable discovery, and that the story told by the Pitcairn men, however it might seem to border on the miraculous, was nevertheless strictly true.

The colony on Pitcairn was found to consist of forty-six persons, and it seemed to be a singularly happy and prosperous community, as well as a singularly well-conducted one. Adams was able to set before the officers quite a luxurious dinner, when they landed to investigate and explore. It was odd to see the eager curiosity of the children and their surprise at some of the commonest things. They were particularly puzzled by a cow they saw on board one of the frigates. Some took it to be a pig

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with horns, others a monster goat. From Adams the sailors learnt the story of the *Bounty's* voyage under Christian's command. The tale is neither uninteresting nor devoid of exciting features.

Some of the handful of mutineers who had gone off in the *Bounty* had been desirous of trying the Marquesas Islands, but Fletcher Christian, who was better informed, settled on Pitcairn as their destination, and accordingly made for that island. To the joy of the little band they found Pitcairn everything they could wish. The soil seemed good and fertile, with excellent water and plenty of wood. Its area, some four miles square, was ample for their purpose. In the interior were mountains with passes that could easily be defended by a few against many, should enemies come and attack. In short, the *Bounty* was cleared of everything and then burnt. The land was fairly divided amongst the white settlers, and their new life began. For a couple of years the Englishmen were happy and prosperous enough.

Not so the unfortunate Otaheitans who had accompanied them; they, poor creatures, were in pitiable case. Virtually slaves, they were badly treated and heavily worked by their masters. At length the worm turned, and the down-trodden wretches made a plot to kill the oppressors. This, luckily, was divulged to the Englishmen by the Otaheitan wives some of them had married. Enraged, the settlers put to death two of the plotters. This brought reprisals, and suddenly the Otaheitans rose in a body and killed no fewer than five of the Englishmen, Christian, the leader, being one of them. Two more of the whites fled to the hills, where one of them, a Scotchman, managed to extract a fiery spirit from a native root. The two men, both fellows of indifferent character,

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became mad drunk, and in his frenzy one of them sprang over the cliff and was killed. The other tried again and again to murder Adams and Young, the only whites besides himself left, and they were forced to kill him in self-protection, striking him down with a hatchet.

The surviving couple from this time began to mend their ways, and from reckless and ill-behaved, became sober and devoutly religious men. Years passed, the little colony prospering greatly. Sons and daughters were born to the islanders, and two or three more whites coming by chance to the spot settled there, one of them a man who made an excellent schoolmaster. In 1814, as we have seen, the population numbered forty-six persons, Adams being the only one of the original settlers left. The children were well taught and most piously brought up. They spoke English correctly and grammatically. The religion of the islanders seemed to be as genuine and heartfelt as it was simple, and in daily and hourly evidence. Vice and evil-living were all but unknown on Pitcairn, and altogether the islanders were a pattern to the world. By the middle of the last century the population had increased to nearly two hundred souls. A few words from a writer on the subject may be given in conclusion.

“All that remains to be said of this excellent people is, that they appear to live together in perfect harmony and contentment; to be virtuous, religious, cheerful, and hospitable beyond the limits of prudence; to be patterns of conjugal and parental affection, and to have very few vices.”

CHAPTER IV

ON THE EDGE OF THE POLAR SEA

The "Open Polar Sea"—Dr. Hayes—In Smith's Sound—Blown out again—In an ice lane—Hemmed in—A terrible crush—Lifted by the ice—A time of suspense—The ship rights itself—A walrus hunt—Rifles and harpoon at work—Desperate attack on the sportsmen—A lively quarter of an hour—A splendid specimen—Explorer travels 450 miles over ice in sledge—The "northernmost bit of land on the globe"—The "Open Polar Sea."

TO the more adventurous of the human race there would seem to be something marvellously fascinating in the exploration of the frozen latitudes and in what may be called the race for the Poles. In every age since the dawn of history there have been men who have been ready to risk their lives and fortunes in the attempt to make fresh discoveries in very high latitudes and to carry the flag of their nation to a point nearer—be it never so little nearer—to the geographical poles of our earth. To give even the merest summary of what has been done in that way in ancient, and still more in modern times would need the compass of a volume; a bare list of the names of those who have been distinguished in Arctic or Antarctic discovery and adventure would require pages.

In our own days men of science generally have come to believe that around the North Pole lies a great sea, which is probably not frozen, but open water—the "Open Polar Sea," as it has been styled. To carry a ship into that

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open sea or, if that is found to be impossible, to reach its shores across the intervening leagues of ice has long been an object of keen ambition among explorers. One who ardently desired to do this thing was Dr. Hayes, an American medical man, away back in the fifties and sixties. His ambition had been fired during his service as ship's surgeon under Dr. Kane, of the United States Navy.

It was years before Dr. Hayes was able to carry out the work on which he had so much set his heart. Difficulties innumerable cropped up, chiefly in the way of finding the money necessary for such an expedition. At last, however, they were surmounted, and in July, 1860, the explorer found himself in command of a modest schooner, the *United States*, and a company of fourteen men of all ranks, to be added to when Greenland was reached. His destination was Smith's Sound, a continuation northward of Baffin's Bay. He had already with Dr. Kane, in 1855, traversed the eastern side of this channel, but he was of opinion that the western side offered better prospects of success—that is, of reaching the open Polar waters beyond. Thither, therefore, Dr. Hayes directed his course.

We may in fancy join the expedition at the entrance into Smith's Sound, a point that was not reached without bad weather in plenty. Fortunately the damage the ship had sustained was not such as to unfit her for further progress northwards. But now the difficulties and dangers began to thicken round the explorers. A gale arose, and straightway blew the vessel out of the Sound again, and it was only with enormous efforts on the part of the crew that she could be brought once more into the channel. Several lanes or passages now appeared in the ice, and after careful consideration the commander selected one of

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them, and the vessel was steered into it. At a good distance beyond, open water could be seen, and to reach that was all the doctor's endeavour.

For ten miles the *United States* progressed in safety. But by this time the current was found to be strongly against her; the ice on either side was coming nearer, and the passage was fast closing up. All possible sail was clapped on; but to no purpose: the vessel was compelled to turn. All at once a grave disaster threatened. A great ice-field was seen at hand, and a collision was inevitable. Says the commander: "To me the prospect was doubly disagreeable. For the greater facility of observation I had taken my station on the foretop-yard; and the mast being already sprung and swinging with my weight, I had little other expectation than that, when the shock came, it would snap off and land me with the wreck on the ice ahead." Fortunately the mast held, though the cut-water was split and the iron sheathing of the vessel torn off "like brown paper."

A tedious yet exciting time followed, and for more than an hour the crew battled hard to escape from so dangerous a predicament. It was all useless effort; for by that time the ice had closed in round the ship. The exhibition of force which nature shows at times in the Arctic seas is exceeded, Dr. Hayes declares, only by the earthquake and the volcano. And such a display of power was seen now. Whenever two floes met in collision there would be forced up into the air, higher than the masthead, a mighty ridge of ice. This ridge the next moment would fall with a crash, to be submerged deep in the waters. Woe betide the vessel which should find itself in the midst of such a conflict! The *United States*, fortunately, happened to be for a time riding in a sort of triangular dock, so to speak,

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formed by the ice-floes. But bit by bit the blocks were grinding each other to pieces; bit by bit the ice was filling up the little basin. For the explorers the situation was nothing less than terrifying. Nothing they could do could avert the catastrophe, and they could only watch with straining eyes the forces of destruction advancing inch by inch upon them.

The fatal moment came. The ice ground against the keel, and the vessel trembled and groaned like a huge animal in pain. The result was not long delayed. "Her sides seemed to be giving way," says Dr. Hayes, "her deck timbers were bowed up, and the seams of the deck planks were opened. I gave up for lost the little craft which had gallantly carried us through so many scenes of peril; but her sides were solid and her ribs strong; and the ice on the port side, working gradually under the bilge, at length, with a jerk that sent us all reeling, lifted her out of the water; and the floes still pressing on and breaking, as they were crowded together, a vast ridge was piling up beneath and around us; and, as if with the elevating power of a thousand jack-screws, we found ourselves going slowly up into the air."

An anxious time truly! And in this dangerous plight did the ship remain for eight long hours. The crew were all the while torn by the thought that in all probability one of two catastrophes would come for them, both dreadful. Either the vessel would heel over completely on the ice, in which case her near destruction was all but certain; or the piles of ice, which grew ever loftier, might topple over and crush vessel and crew alike beneath their gigantic weight.

With what thankfulness and joy the sailors saw signs of release coming may be imagined. A few open bits of

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water showed here and there ; the ice was pressing upon the ship with less force ; soon the blocks that held up the vessel might be expected to part and set her free. But how ? That became a very grave question. The actual progress of events was curious, and for the moment not less alarming. The ice opened first towards the fore-part of the craft, and at once the bows dropped down into the water, the after portion of the ship sticking up into the air, of course, and pointing skywards. But the suspense was not of long duration. A few moments later the ice came together again, and it seemed as if the ship was about to be lifted out of the water as before. Suddenly one of the floes began to swing round, and in an instant the schooner had dropped with a tremendous splash into the sea, “reeling forward and backward and from side to side, as the ice, seeking its own equilibrium, settled head-long and in wild confusion beneath us from its forced elevation.”

The explorers breathed more freely, yet for hours they were in a state of uncertainty and dread. The hold was rapidly filling with water, and the pumps had to be immediately manned. Presently, to the relief of those on board, it was found that the *United States* had received less damage than had been expected. By pumping about a quarter of the time, the men were able to keep the vessel sufficiently free from water to admit of safe navigation till repairs could be effected.

Of dangers many and various—storms, ice-pressure, frost-bites, snow-blindness, and the like—Dr. Hayes and his little company experienced plenty and to spare, and we may pass them by. But a remarkable walrus hunt deserves to be described. It was in the beginning of the summer of 1861, and in the neighbourhood of Port

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Foulke, in Greenland. The doctor had not hitherto been wont to consider the walrus in the light of a dangerous animal, but the experiences of that day caused him quickly and for ever to change his opinion.

It was a grand sunny morning of the Arctic mid-summer time, and the explorer-in-chief had ascended a hill near the shore to select a spot whereon to build a cairn. Before long he heard a noise of many bellowings, and looking down upon the bay, he saw an extraordinary sight. The ice was drifting about in patches, and both water and floating blocks were covered thick with black objects which he knew to be walruses. The beasts were there in thousands, and Dr. Hayes declares that their numbers were beyond conjecture, for they reached quite out of his ken. Here was an opportunity for sport indeed!

Hayes flew down to the shore and called up his men, who quickly drew the boat over the ice to the water and sprang aboard. The party carried a harpoon, two or three guns, and a line. Then away they scudded at a spanking rate over the couple of miles of sea that separated them from the shoal of walruses. The first of the beasts they met with—some two dozen of them—were on a piece of floating ice, and disporting themselves to their content. Here the sportsmen resolved to commence operations. The brutes were wholly unconscious of danger, and after a first glance towards the advancing boat—they had never seen one before, that was pretty certain—they took no further notice, but went on with their play. Nevertheless, the men had muffled their oars, and came up as noiselessly as possible.

By this time the sportsmen were able to take stock of their game, so to speak, and an ugly lot they found the

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beasts to be. How formidable the walrus might become they realised at once, and the doctor says he and all felt like soldiers charging the enemy for the first time in their lives. The bulls especially were formidable fellows, measuring not less than sixteen feet in length and almost as much round the unwieldy body. The hanging tusks were huge, and all about their noses and nostrils stood out strong bristles not unlike the quills of a porcupine. The aspect of the face was ugly and forbidding in the extreme. As for their hides, they seemed to be made of impenetrable leather, an integument to turn any bullet. The frontal bones were far too thick and strong to be pierced by a ball, enough at least to admit of the bullet travelling on further to a vital part; thus, unless through the eye, the animal could not be killed by a shot in the head. Two old bulls were amusing themselves by prodding each other with their tusks, and treated the new-comers with profound indifference. One of the brutes presently went off to sleep in the very presence of the enemy. Never had the men seen a greater exhibition of coolness, and in their inmost breasts they were beginning to feel what is known as "funky." However, none of them cared to show the white feather, and at it they went.

And now the attackers were close to the ice-floe with its score of walruses, a veritable mixture of bulls, cows, calves, and half-grown animals. The guns were levelled and the harpooner stood ready. The only safe plans were, either to shoot the beasts on the ice, or to harpoon them surely if they took to the water. It was well known that the brutes would dive to the bottom in the latter case, that is, at first. But they would soon have to come to the surface again to breathe, and then, with good luck, they might be secured. Three balls were sent flying

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into the group simultaneously. One struck a bull in the neck ; another killed a young one, but the body unfortunately rolled off the floe and was lost ; while Dr. Hayes himself wounded the head of a second bull, which gave vent to a bellow that far surpassed any ever given by his namesake of Bashan. This last brute instantly flung himself off the ice, narrowly missing the boat in his fall, and sending the water splashing in all directions over the men. The harpooner had just time, as the walrus tumbled off his floe, to drive well home his weapon.

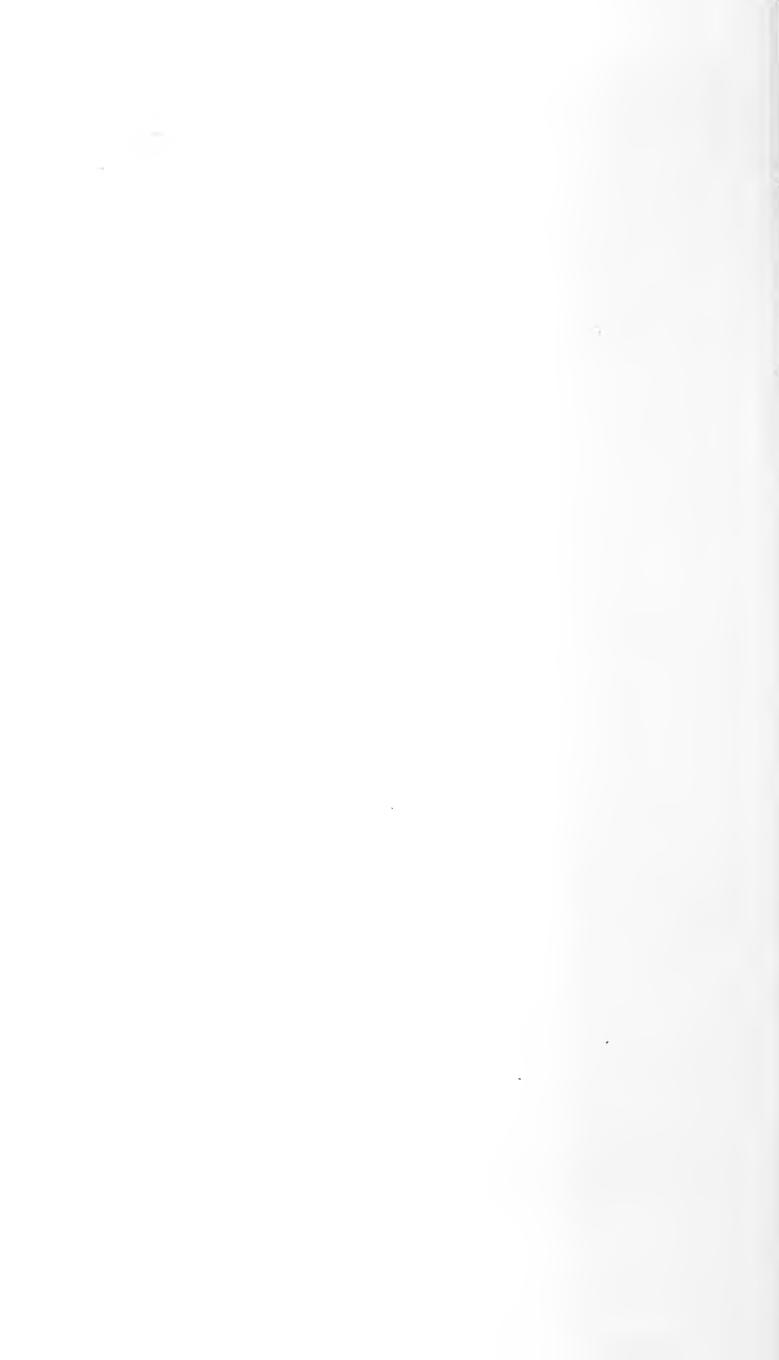
Exciting moments followed. The animals, now alarmed, dropped one and all into the water and sank to the bottom like stones. The harpoon rope ran out at an astonishing rate over the gunwale, but in its passage it became entangled in some pieces of ice. It was not that the whole length of line had run out, but a coil of it had caught. It would have been all over with the craft, but quick as thought one of the sailors sprang out and cleared the line. Soon the rope began to hang loose, and the slack was pulled in ; the animal was coming up to blow.

It was at a distance of fifty yards from the boat that the herd reappeared, the harpooned bull among them. What would happen next ? The sportsmen were not left long in doubt. With a mighty chorus of bellowings and shrieks that stunned the ear and made the whole bay resound, the brutes dashed up to the boat, which in an instant was surrounded by an enormous throng. "The cry was taken up and passed along from floe to floe, like the bugle-blast passed from squadron to squadron along a line of battle ; and down from every piece of ice plunged the startled beasts, as quickly as the sailor drops from his hammock when the long-roll beats to quarters. With their ugly heads just above the water, and with mouths



ATTACKED BY WALRUSES

An immense animal made its way to the boat, and tried to get its tusks over the side, but happily I was able to load in time. I raised my piece and fired into its mouth, and he went down like a stone.



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wide open, belching forth the dismal 'huk! huk! huk!' they came tearing toward the boat." That the animals meant fight was soon evident, and the boat and its occupants "became the focus of at least a thousand gaping, bellowing mouths." The explorers had got themselves into a fix. The beasts at once made desperate efforts to get their tusks over the side of the boat; had a single one of them succeeded, there would have been disaster of a serious kind, and every man of them all would have been struggling for his life in the chilly waters among the maddened monsters. It would not do to be idle, and a lively quarter of an hour followed. While the men with the rifles fired and reloaded as fast as they could, the sailors struck right and left with their oars, and one of them used a lance with great effect. Time after time the danger became pressing, time after time the end seemed to be at hand, but the quickness of the crew saved the situation. Two or three really terrifying incidents came. One of them is thus graphically told by the commander himself. "Again, an immense animal, the largest that I had ever seen and with tusks apparently three feet long, was observed to be making his way through the herd with his mouth wide open, bellowing dreadfully. I was now as before, busy loading; Knorr and Jensen had just discharged their pieces, and the men were well engaged with their oars. It was a critical moment, but, happily, I was in time. The monster, his head high above the boat, was within two feet of the gunwale, when I raised my piece and fired into his mouth. The discharge killed him instantly, and he went down like a stone."

This was too much for the rest of the herd. With one accord the brutes dived with an immense splash and made

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off, not rising again till they were at a safe distance. For a moment the sportsmen looked for a return, but nothing of the kind came; every head was turned away from them and towards the open sea. The flight was in earnest, to the satisfaction of the men, no doubt. They had not done badly. They had come out of the fray with whole skins; that was much under the circumstances. They had managed to secure two out of the dozen or so of walruses which had been slain. One of these was the fine bull that had been harpooned. The beast had tried his best to follow his retreating brethren, but, becoming weaker, he was approached and dispatched. Dr. Hayes thus obtained a splendid specimen for his Natural History collection.

It will be asked, Did the explorer reach the "Open Polar Sea" he had so ardently longed to behold? Yes and no. The story of what he did actually accomplish may be told in a few lines. Leaving his ship in charge of some of his men, he started off, with two or three companions, on a long and adventurous sledge journey across the frozen seas, the only manner in which he could win farther north. After many hardships and sufferings he succeeded in gaining a point which he estimated to be $81^{\circ} 35''$ N., on the coast of Grinnell Land, on the other side of the Kennedy Channel, which separates that shore from Greenland. Here he was effectually stopped; it was in the spring of 1861.

The instinct of his dogs told them that the ice was becoming thin and dangerous, and they refused to face it. In vain Hayes and Knorr, the only two men who had got so far, tried to find stronger ice; the dogs would have none of it. For miles the doctor walked along the shores of the great bay off which they were; nowhere did a

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possible stretch of ice present itself. At last, in his despair, the chief climbed a hill on the coast. He soon perceived, to his keen disappointment, that he had come to the end of his northward course. A great ice crack started in the bay and stretched across the sea, joining other cracks, and ever widening, till at last it seemed to be lost in the waving sea beyond, in the dim distance, and under a great cloud bank that covered the whole sky from east to west—the “Open Polar Sea!”

A wonderful sight it was that met his eyes from the hill-top. The coast stretched away northwards, a series of deep bays and striking headlands. His eye roamed over these till it rested fascinated on the farthest of the bold and lofty promontories. Beyond that no land could be seen. Was not that rugged and precipitous ness the northernmost bit of land on our globe? And was not that dark stretch of waters the Polar Sea men had so desired to gaze upon? Hayes had no doubt of it. The headland he took to be in about latitude $82^{\circ} 30''$, or four hundred and fifty miles from the North Pole, a distance not greater than that which separated him from his ship. No wonder the explorer gazed on the spectacle with a full heart. He was not to navigate that hitherto unseen ocean, but he had been privileged to see that which even the great Parry himself had never seen.

“It possessed a fascination for me,” he writes, “and it was with no ordinary sensations that I contemplated my situation, with one solitary companion, in that hitherto untrodden desert; while my nearness to the earth’s axis, the consciousness of standing upon land far beyond the limits of previous observation, the reflections which crossed my mind respecting the vast ocean which lay spread out before me, the thought that these ice-girdled

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waters might lash the shores of distant islands where dwell human beings of an unknown race, were all circumstances calculated to invest the very air with mystery, to deepen the curiosity, and to strengthen the resolution to persevere in my determination to sail upon this sea and to explore its furthest limits."

It is no discredit to a gallant explorer of forty-seven years ago that his "farthest north" has since been altogether beaten by more recent travellers, notably by Dr. Nansen and the Duke of Abruzzi.

CHAPTER V

DUNDONALD AND HIS FIRESHIPS

Lord Dundonald—"Worthy to stand with Blake"—His naval exploits—In command of the *Speedy*—A torment to the Spaniard—Attacked by the *Gamo*—Boarding with blackened faces—Capture of the *Gamo*—Cochrane's wonderful career with the *Speedy*—Also with the *Pallas*—Fireship operations against French—Subordinate to Lord Gambier—The French boom and its defences—Fireships and explosion vessels—The first of the explosion ships fired by Cochrane himself—Terrific result—*Mediator* sails through broken boom—Its captain blown out of his ship—Thirteen French vessels stranded—More destruction by the English—Gambier refuses help—Gambier court-martialled, but acquitted—Cochrane dismissed—Offers his sword to the foreigner.

THERE are some who are unfortunate enough never to receive the meed of praise due to their real greatness; who fail to achieve that place on the roll of fame to which their surpassing merits entitle them. And this is true of all ranks of life in which fame and name are to be won—among poets, artists, statesmen, soldiers, sailors, scholars, divines, men of medicine or law. A signal example of a man whom the world has not rated according to his deserts is to be found in the Earl of Dundonald, better known by his earlier title of Lord Cochrane, whose exploits and achievements as a seaman have rarely been equalled, and perhaps never exceeded, for dash and brilliancy, in all our naval history. It has been said with truth that he deserves "to stand by the side of Blake."

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Lord Cochrane, to keep to the name under which he did all his wonderful work, was so to speak a seaman from his birth, for we find him at the age of ten or eleven already a middy with his uncle, Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane, having his tutor with him on board, however, that he might go on with his general education while learning to be a sailor. His serious work as a naval officer may be said to have begun some years later than that, say in 1794, at which time he would be eighteen or nineteen years of age. From this date the young nobleman's fine feats of seamanship and his astounding deeds of daring follow each other so closely and in such numbers that the brain is almost in a whirl with the mere reading of them. A couple of his exploits may be given as a sample of the whole.

In the year 1801, by which time the young officer had become Captain Lord Cochrane, in command of the *Speedy*, a fourteen-gun brig, he performed a remarkable feat. His little vessel had for some time been a terrible torment to the French and the Spaniards, and the latter were determined to rid themselves of what they considered to be a tiresome little pest. A large vessel, carrying thirty-two guns, was accordingly sent against the little *Speedy*. The *Gamo*, as the Spanish warship was named, in the matter of size, armament, and crew was almost absurdly the superior of the English brig. She carried a company of no fewer than 319 men, as against the *Speedy's* fifty-four, and she had available for broadside firing sixteen guns of large size, as compared with seven much smaller on the part of her little adversary. A number of small gunboats were first sent out against Cochrane to lure him to a position near the shore. These the *Speedy* quickly chased back into

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harbour. But when her captain turned his ship's head to go back, he found himself stopped by the big *Gamo*. It seemed as if he had caught a Tartar.

After some preliminary skirmishings Cochrane dashed close alongside the Spaniard, knowing that from her height above water her big guns would send their shot harmlessly over the bulwarks of the diminutive *Speedy*. At once he prepared to board, calling up for the work every available man, and arranging them in two divisions. The *Gamo* captain, seeing what game was afoot, drew away a few yards, with the view of getting his guns to play on the Britisher. Had Cochrane stood the Spaniard's pounding, it is certain that there would have been a quick end to his command. But he dashed once more alongside and gave the order to board. This boarding had its ludicrous side. The division of men at the bow went with blackened faces, and with injunctions to make themselves look as hideous as possible, in order to scare the enemy. At the same instant Cochrane himself with the other boarding section sprang aboard the Spaniard aft.

The enemy, thus between two fires, "were driven into a confused mass in the waist. Here a desperate hand-to-hand struggle ensued, which would probably have continued much longer had not one of the *Speedy's* men, by direction of Lord Cochrane, fought his way to the ensign staff, and hauled down the Spanish colours. The effect of this was the surrender of the Spaniards, they believing that the colours had been hauled down by their commanding officer's directions."

It seemed marvellous! Here was a handful of men under the command of a youthful but fearless skipper the possessors of a great Spanish ship manned by hundreds of sailors! What to do with the prisoners even was a puzzle,

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but Cochrane soon found a way out of the difficulty. Driving all the Spaniards below, he placed men with guns at the hatchways, under the charge of his brother, a young volunteer, till they could be dealt with. In this extraordinary engagement the British ship lost but one man. Before Cochrane had done with the *Speedy*, a matter of ten months only, he had captured no fewer than thirty-three ships, with a total of 530 men and 128 guns. And, it is worth while mentioning, at a later date, when in command of the *Pallas*, he destroyed fifteen of the enemy's ships in the space of a couple of months.

But Lord Cochrane's most brilliant piece of service for his own country was also his last as a British commander, and it may be doubted whether in the whole of our naval story a more splendid feat can be found recorded. Cochrane was by this time, in the year 1809, an admiral. He was sent specially to take charge of the fireship operations projected against the French fleet in the Basque Roads, in the Bay of Biscay. He was not to be in chief command, indeed Lord Cochrane never reached that position while in the service of his own country. He was to act under the orders of Admiral Lord Gambier, and the work designed for him was such as required a daring and a coolness of no ordinary kind, and Cochrane was unhesitatingly selected for it. From the first Gambier was unfriendly, and there seems to be little doubt that the Admiral commanding was, to say the least of it, hardly disposed to support strongly and fully his brilliant subordinate's efforts. Lord Gambier described the proposed operations as "a horrible mode of warfare," though he was forced to admit it was necessary. For this squadron in the Basque Roads was the very force on which the French relied for their attacks on our West Indian Islands ; to

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save our possessions, therefore, it was absolutely imperative that a crushing blow should without delay be struck at this home fleet.

The French force consisted of ten line-of-battle ships, three frigates, and an armed troopship. It was drawn up in the waters lying behind the island of Aix and the Boyart shoal to the south-west of it. Both island and shoal were fortified, Aix especially, which had strong batteries, and a force probably not far short of two thousand men. In the channel between islet and shoal the French had constructed a novel but very strong piece of defence work, a boom half a mile long, "composed of spars, and cables of the largest dimensions, secured by five-ton anchors." Behind this lay the French ships drawn up in double line. The passage between the ends of the boom and the land was in each case narrow and dangerous, on the one hand being the guns of Aix and on the other the shallows. It can be seen, therefore, that to get at the French fleet so snugly hidden in the bay behind, it was necessary first to destroy the formidable obstruction. To do this, and then to grapple with the ships, was now the task assigned to Cochrane, and an operation more beset with difficulties and dangers can hardly be conceived. Even the inner waters where the enemy lay were full of shoals and unsafe bits of water. The business Lord Cochrane had undertaken to carry through was truly a desperate one.

He saw at once that fireships alone would not suffice for the work, and accordingly he prepared a couple of explosion vessels also. The larger of these was a monstrous affair, "containing 1500 barrels of powder, in puncheons placed on end, and secured by stout hawsers, and formed into a solid mass by wedges and wet sand

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rammed hard between the casks. On the top of this mass of gunpowder nearly 400 live shells, with short fuses, and some hundreds of hand grenades and rockets were deposited." Of fireships there were twelve got ready, but it is not certain that use was made of them all.

Meanwhile, the French Admiral, Allemand, behind his boom, was making great preparations to receive the attack he knew was coming. He had a crowd of no fewer than seventy-three ship's boats of one kind or another, and every night they were drawn up in five divisions near the ends of the boom. The crews of these were prepared both to protect the boom itself and to keep the narrow channels between the obstruction and the land. Their orders were to tackle any fireship that might appear; to destroy it, if possible; to board it, if necessary and practicable, at whatever risk.

The night of April 11th was that fixed by Cochrane for the attack. The British ships engaged in the business were the *Impérieuse*, which anchored in deep water off the shoal, the *Aigle*; the *Unicorn*, the *Pallas*, the *Etna*, the *Emerald*, and four gun-brigs. There were besides two "pointer" ships, craft placed one on either side of the course marked out for the fireships to take. These last two ships had their lights visible to the attacking fleet but screened from the enemy. Admiral Lord Gambier lay three or four miles back with the main body of his fleet.

And now the hour of action has come. It is half-past eight in the evening, and dark. The fire and explosion ships are ready. On the larger of these latter is Admiral Cochrane, accompanied by only Lieutenant Bissell and four plucky seamen volunteers. Hardly any more perilous

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situation than that of these six British sailors can be imagined. They are standing on a magazine of almost inconceivable destructive power, which an accident may at any moment explode; while it is more than probable that a shot from the enemy may fire the ship before the brave fellows have finished their work and got themselves away to a safe distance. But Cochrane is not the man to flinch for an instant, however appalling the danger.

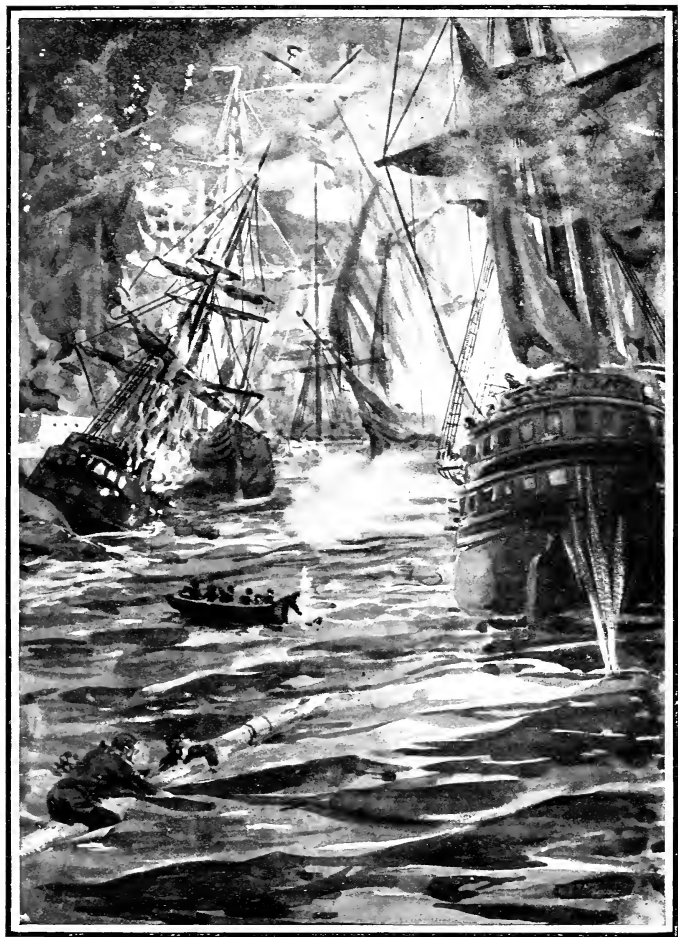
Steadily the explosion ship advanced upon the boom, followed by the *Mediator* and others of the fire-vessels. Reaching a point as near the boom as was safe, the Admiral ordered his five companions into the small boat accompanying, and himself remained to light the fuses. With astounding coolness he performed his task, well knowing that a single one of the grenades exploding before its time would blow him to atoms. Then Cochrane dropped over the side of the fatal vessel into the boat, his work well done, and with the expectation that the matches would burn for a quarter of an hour. Instantly the men pushed off and dashed away in search of safety.

Not more than five minutes had passed, however, when there came a thunder that rent the air, and in a moment the grenades and rockets were flying in every direction, while the sea was heaved up into an immense wave that, travelling on, threatened to swamp every craft within reach. Cochrane and his men had gone but a short distance when the explosion came, and they were exposed to the deadly missiles darting about them in such numbers. How any single man of them all escaped death is inexplicable; their escape, in truth, was in a manner miraculous. Yet they remained unhurt amid a display that was truly frightful in its destructive force, and appalling to witness.

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The bolt had been launched, but had it reached the mark against which it had been hurled? Had the explosion shattered the boom? That was now the all-important question, and in the darkness of the night the point could be settled only by actual observation and trial. The man for this was ready to hand. Commander James Wooldridge, the captain of the *Mediator* fireship, at once made for the spot, hurling his vessel with all possible impetus against the boom. The *Mediator* crashed through whatever trifle of obstacle there had been left after the explosion. That Wooldridge's vessel was not heavy enough to crush so formidable a work without other aid is certain, yet there were some who were of opinion that the explosion had occurred too far away from the boom to do any damage to it. It was asserted, in fact, that the explosion ship was a full mile away when the catastrophe came, a statement which seems on the face of it absurd. And the question is settled by the records, still extant, of the *Indienne*, the nearest French ship to the boom: these state the distance to have been not more than about a hundred yards.

Wooldridge was a splendid fellow. He was the first to get through, though he was followed closely by several of the others. His ship was presently on fire, but he did not budge. The inevitable was not long in coming, and the gallant captain and three or four of his officers and men were blown out of their vessel. The Frenchmen within were at once in deadly peril. One of them, the *Océan*, was sorely beset, and to escape the fearful fireship she cut her cable. Almost at once she swung round, fouling two other vessels, the *Tonnerre* and the *Patriote*. Then the *Océan* drifted helplessly upon the Palles shoal, just missing another fireship in her course thither; in fact,



AN ATTACK BY FIRE-SHIPS

The sky was illuminated by the red glare of the fire-ships, and the burning masses and the repeated explosions made a scene that was truly awful.

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the captain of the French vessel had to shoot away the mainmast of the attacking fireship, in order to get away in safety. It is said that the *Océan* lost as many as fifty men before she could get clear from even the first of the fireships.

What followed can be but faintly pictured : the flaring fireships careering madly among the enemy—the roar of cannon and the crash of shot and shell—the cries of the terrified French—the helpless grounding of their ships upon the shoals at hand—the spectacle, indeed, defies description. A few words from Mr. Allen's *Life of Admiral Cochrane*, however, may be cited : "The crews of the French ships became panic-stricken, and all hands did their best to quit so dangerous a roadstead. The darkness of the night rendered the effect of the burning masses and repeated explosions still more awful. The sky was illuminated by the red glare of the fireships, and, added to the flashes of the guns from the forts and the incessant flight of shells and rockets, the scene was awfully sublime."

Next morning brought to the eyes of the British sailors a sight that must have astonished as well as gratified them. No fewer than nine of the French ships of the line and four of the frigates lay stranded in various parts of the bay ; some of them upon hard rock and in such a position that they were in danger of heeling over ; some on the mud of the shoals, and one badly bilged.

The course of events that ensued remains to our day as strange and inexplicable as it was deplorable at the time. To follow up the advantage already gained, and entirely to disable, or to capture, the stranded Frenchmen, was evidently the task to which every nerve in the British fleet should have been instantly strained—and so

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the resolute Cochrane thought. He was eager to be in the thick of it while the Frenchmen were still grounded. For it was certain that shortly the captains would succeed in warping off their vessels. The matter pressed urgently; even an hour later might, almost certainly would, be too late. But without the help of his superior, Cochrane was able to do but little. Accordingly he flew the signal for assistance. To his dismay no notice was taken of it by Lord Gambier. Later on Gambier defended himself by stating that in his opinion the risk to be run was enormous, while the advantage to be gained was in the highest degree problematical; that, in short, the British stood to lose heavily by venturing among the French fleet. Yet all the while there were but two of the enemy that were afloat; the rest for the moment were stranded, and thus almost powerless to do serious harm. The French crews, too, were in a desperate panic. Again Cochrane implored his commander to send him assistance at once. It was two in the afternoon before Lord Gambier bestirred himself at all. When he did, the *Indefatigable*, which he sent to Cochrane's help, was prevented by the change in the wind from reaching the spot quickly.

To a man of Lord Cochrane's temperament such treatment and such delay were intolerable, and his patience came to an end. Slipping the anchor of the *Impérieuse*, he floated with the tide down among the French vessels. He was soon firing his broadsides into the *Calcutta*, at the same time keeping the *Varsovie* also employed with his bow-chasers. Before long the former vessel struck her colours and her crew deserted her. The Admiral sent an officer and men to take charge of the capture. Oddly enough, in the confusion, some of the British frigates at hand went on firing at the French ship, not knowing she

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had surrendered. The tale of destruction went on, the enemy sustaining disaster upon disaster.

Time would fail to tell of the thousand and one incidents that filled up the day and the following night. Midnight saw a return of the panic among the French. The English fireships had been again prepared, and this doubtless the enemy knew, or suspected. As it fell out, the wind was now in such a quarter as to prevent their use. Just at this time, however, an immense conflagration burst forth on the waters, the British having fired two of their captures. The blaze alarmed the enemy, who for the most part took to their boats and fled in a state of terror. They returned to the ships when the morning light showed them to be uninjured. The rest of the story, and its melancholy ending for Cochrane, needs but few words for the telling of it. The dauntless Scotchman, burning to finish the task he had taken in hand, and in which he had thus far sped with such conspicuous success, prayed for more active help from Gambier. The commander sent him a letter drawn up in flattering terms, but hinting that enough had been done. Cochrane, in a furious rage, refused to take this broad hint. At length, after a game of sixes and sevens between the two admirals, the chief superseded his subordinate, Captain Wolfe being sent to take Lord Cochrane's place.

The gallant sailor had done his last piece of work for his country's Navy; henceforth his skill as a seaman, his dash and marvellous pluck, his incomparable energy and resource were to pass into the service of the stranger—the Brazilian, the Greek, and what not. It was on this wise.

Lord Gambier had great political influence, and it was used to crush his brilliant subordinate. Cochrane

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took advantage of his position as a member of Parliament to denounce his old superior in the House of Commons, when the question of a lavish reward to Gambier came on for discussion. The upshot was that the farce of court-martialling Gambier was gone through. He was acquitted; and that acquittal meant, and proved to be, professional ruin for the subordinate Admiral who had dared to express his opinion of his chief's conduct in the Basque Roads affair. Lord Cochrane's services were from that hour dispensed with, and he was compelled to offer his sword to the foreigner. Cochrane was ousted from the Navy he had loved so well, and of which he had been one of the greatest ornaments its records can show. He received for his splendid services neither thanks nor reward, save for the empty Knight Commandership of the Bath bestowed upon him by the King. For all that, Admiral Thomas Cochrane, Earl of Dundonald, is not unworthy to stand with Blake, with Raleigh, with Rodney.

CHAPTER VI

A "COFFIN SHIP"

"Coffin ships"—The *Melville Castle*—Starts with troops and stores for the East—A hurricane—Mainmast gone—In Sandgate Bay—A leak—All hands to the pumps—A warning from a Dover pilot—Astounding parsimony—Two more warnings—Ship crashes upon one of the groynes—Pumps abandoned—Ship's back broken!—170 persons perish—Jolly-boat swamped—A raft made, but at once overturned—Bowsprit breaks off—Two men escape on hogs-head—A second raft—Eighteen survivors out of 454.

IT is a good many years since Mr. Plimsoll took up the cause of the poor sailors who were sent to sea in "coffin ships"—rotten vessels unfit to be sent out with precious lives on board, and the younger generation is in danger of forgetting the very name of the seaman's friend. At any rate, under the vastly improved conditions of life for the present-day British mariner, there are many among us who have no notion how bad was the state of things before Plimsoll's time—how many were the rotten and ill-equipped ships sent out on a far voyage across the ocean—what deplorable and heart-breaking loss of valuable property and far more valuable lives often ensued. Awful cases of wreck, of loss, of suffering, of deaths by the hundred, occurred through the carelessness or the greed of owners who sent out these "coffin ships." A striking instance in point was that of the *Melville Castle*, early in the last century, a catastrophe all the more terrible in that it happened at our very doors, as it

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were, and within a few yards of sympathising but helpless spectators on shore.

It was in the year 1802 that the *Melville Castle*, a worn-out old East Indiaman, no longer fit for the Company's service, was sold for what she would fetch. The purchasers were a party of Amsterdam merchants, who meant to hire out the vessel to the Dutch Government to carry troops and stores to the Cape of Good Hope and Batavia. The buyers must have known the actual state of the ship, but they bought nevertheless, no doubt tempted by the very moderate price. The new owners, a thrifty set, did not waste money in repairs. To save a few hundreds, they patched up the surface, repainted the craft, and rechristened her the *Vryheid*. To make the farce complete, the Dutch Government surveyor reported that the ship was in perfect repair and fit for the business in hand. What the *Vryheid's* real condition was, the lamentable sequel only too forcibly showed.

Without delay the stores were put on board, and the soldiers embarked, a selection of 320 men having been made from a force of three thousand who had been marched from Rotterdam. These were consequently picked men, and were of various nationalities—Dutch, French, Germans. The officers and a few private passengers followed, and the vessel sailed on November 24th.

All went well for a day or two. Presently a strong breeze sprang up, and from a bad quarter, causing much delay and some anxiety, the captain especially being uneasy, for he was under no delusions as to the real condition of his ship. He struck his top-gallant masts and yards, and the vessel laboured less heavily. By this time the anxiety was spreading to the crew and the troops. The wind increased in violence, and before long a terrific

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storm was upon the luckless *Vryheid*. The ladies and children, already seriously ill from the effects of the rough weather, now became terribly alarmed. They grew more and more frightened, many of them being in a state of collapse, physical and mental. The officers came out well at this trying time, going among the soldiers and passengers, ministering to them, and endeavouring to calm their fears. Captain Scherman, the skipper, had his own wife on board, with an infant in arms, and him the women beset, imploring him to save them, till the poor man was almost distracted. All the while the ship was driving furiously before the gale.

By Monday afternoon the tempest had increased to a hurricane of the most violent kind. Suddenly the main-mast broke off and went by the board, carrying with it a number of unfortunate fellows, and injuring four or five in its fall, a catastrophe that naturally augmented the general alarm. The ship was now quite near to the Kentish coast, and the people could be clearly seen watching the vessel from the shore. But for all practical purposes the *Vryheid* might as well have been a hundred miles out at sea. The waves were tremendous, and rolled irresistibly along, surging over the ship till it seemed as if each moment would see her entirely swamped. No help was to be looked for from the shore, and from this time even the bolder spirits began to lose heart.

Captain Scherman had hoisted signals of distress, but there was as yet no sign of a response from the land. By this time the vessel had reached the well-known bight—bay it can hardly be called—bearing indifferently the names of Sandgate Bay, Hythe Bay, Dymchurch Bay. Here there was a trifle of shelter and the force of the tempest was somewhat lessened. Taking advantage of

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this, the officers saw that every person on board was provided with another good meal, a wise step, for no one could tell what demands might not presently be made on his strength. Alas ! just in the midst of it all the alarming report ran round that the ship had sprung a leak. Instantly the pumps were manned, and for three hours the men worked desperately, the tempest all the while gaining in force, the storm having, in fact, returned with redoubled violence.

But the shrieks of the wind through the rigging were almost drowned by the piercing cries of the women and children, who, growing ever more terrified, had by this time become frantic. The husbands were utterly unmanned by the distress and the screams of their wives. But excellent order was still kept, no case of reckless resort to drink or violence being seen. Thus passed the long night of Monday. The dawn on the Tuesday showed that the ship was not far from the village of Dymchurch, and, the best bower anchor suddenly parting, the *Vryheid* began to drift fast towards the long embankment known as Dymchurch Wall, a dyke whose purpose is to keep the sea from the low-lying Romney Marsh behind it. All that trying morning the captain flew his signals of distress, but the weather had become thick, and it was doubtful if the signals could be seen from the shore. Guns were fired at frequent intervals, but whether the sound was heard on land above the roar of the sea, or if it was, whether any help could be sent, it was impossible to tell. But now a diversion occurred, a pilot boat from Dover making its appearance.

"Go back to Deal or Hythe, and wait," was shouted from it, "you are lost to a certainty, if you don't."

So ominous an injunction, from men who knew what

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they were talking about, too, would, one might think, have been instantly obeyed. But the skipper refused to hearken. He did not think the case so bad as all that, he said, but there can be little doubt that he was greatly influenced in his refusal by the consideration that there would be half-a-guinea port dues to pay, if he put back. This bit of Dutch parsimony was to cost Scherman dear, and not only Scherman, unfortunately, but so many hundreds of poor mortals with him. Indeed, the price to be paid for this miserable piece of thrift was terrible. The Dover pilot was followed by two other boats sent by the Commodore at Deal. Captain Scherman was hailed from these and asked to heave to; he took no notice. Then the boatmen fired shots as a further signal; these also were treated with contempt, and the ship was allowed to drive. In their desperation the Commodore's men came right under the stern of the Dutchman, imploring the captain to make an attempt to save his ship while he was yet able. No reply whatever was vouchsafed, and in despair the Englishmen dropped behind and in a few minutes were out of sight. It seems extraordinary that any captain can ever have pursued such a suicidal course as did the skipper of the *Vryheid* on this occasion.

Speedy repentance came to him, however, and he was in a state of despair that he had so fearfully neglected his opportunities. But it was too late now; regrets were unavailing. The roar of the winds and the waves was frightful, the sea swollen and turbulent beyond belief. The vessel was quite near the shore, and the wind, from the south and south-west, was driving her furiously along and athwart the beach. It was seen that she must strike one or other of the long groynes that ran across the shingly strand.

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The worst fears were realised ; on the very first of these groynes the ship dashed with tremendous force, crashing into the piles, against which she began to bump with disastrous effect. It was certain that she could not long stand such a battering. The mizenmast was cut away ; the water-casks were staved ; the ballast was thrown out ; everything that could lighten the vessel was thrown overboard. It was all in vain. Torn with grief now, and overwhelmed by the reproaches of his passengers, the skipper passed a terrible time.

By the advice of the Admiral, who was on board, the sheet anchor was now cut away ; the vessel sheered off a couple of cable-lengths, and hopes began to be entertained that she might be got off altogether. The hopes were dashed at once. The water swirled into the hold so fast that the men were compelled to leave the pumps and run for it. Even if they had remained, the pumps had become choked with sand and were useless. Just then the foremast went over with a crash, carrying with it twelve poor fellows. A moment they were seen struggling in the boiling sea, and then they disappeared from sight amidst the agonised cries of those left on board. The end was not far away now.

Singular to relate, the women began to take off most of their clothing, that being the fashion with the Dutch, it appeared. They were passed along the bowsprit in company with their husbands and children. There they clung, in the bitter November wind and drenched with the cold waves. The admiral and others of the officers, with their ladies, remained on the quarter-deck. Matters grew each moment worse. The rudder was found to be unshipped, and the tiller, left to itself, was swinging violently hither and thither, tearing up the planking of the deck. The

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sea was rushing in at every port. The scene was grand but awful, as the foaming waves made every moment a clean breach, sweeping the craft with such mighty force that it was almost impossible for the poor wretches to hang on.

Prayers were said, a pathetic spectacle. The rest of the anchors were cut away; the guns were again fired, but their noise was quite drowned by the fearful roaring of the sea. Once more the ship dashed upon the piles of the groynes; the people on shore were but four cable-lengths from the doomed ship. On the Wall were plenty of men eager to help, had help been possible. The suspense, both on board and on shore, now became awful. Would every soul perish, and so near land? Would most of the poor wretches reach safety, separated from it by only so short a space?

A word as to the condition of the ship's timbers may be put in here. The first real strain on the vessel had shown how rotten were her planks and beams. It was found that many of the boards of the keel had broken away at the ribs, the wood about the nails being little better than saturated dust well painted over! Seams had started in every direction. Here and there the ends of planks and beams were hanging loose. The new paint had but served to conceal from the uncritical eye the decay and weakness within. Truly this was a "coffin ship," albeit at a time long anterior to the invention of the phrase.

"It was now about twenty-five minutes after eight," says the account given by one of the few survivors, "the morning was peculiarly dark, and, what added new horror to the terrifying scene, we were within four or five cables of the shore, and could discern several people on the

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Wall, but who had no power of affording us relief. In a few moments a most tremendous sea approached, which drove against our poor vessel with such terrific force that, after rocking like a cradle for two or three seconds, she split her timbers and immediately broke her back ! About a hundred and seventy persons were instantly immersed in the sea, not one of whom reached the land ! It is, perhaps, totally out of the power of any pen to convey an adequate idea of our horrible state ; but the reader may figure to himself the situation, when he is informed that the vessel, entirely torn asunder, showed nearly three hundred objects clinging to the various parts of the wreck that appeared above water, whilst the most piercing shrieks and cries from the women and children entirely drowned the turbulent noise of the devouring element."

The jolly-boat was now cleared and launched, and several of the officers, including the Admiral and the colonel of the military, with eight ladies, pushed off in her. Their respite was short indeed ; a fearful sea caught them, and boat and passengers disappeared. The captain himself was not of the party, and Mrs. Scherman had preferred to stay by her husband's side. The colonel was presently observed struggling in the raging waves, supporting his wife with one hand and endeavouring to swim with the other. Another enormous wave at once engulfed them, and they were never seen again.

Undeterred by the fearful fate of the officers and ladies, which their eyes had just seen, a number of the men began to put together a raft, using the broken spars and other parts of the wreckage available. A considerable number of persons crowded on to this frail thing, some of the remaining officers and ladies among them ; of women, in fact, there were many. A few yards from the side of the

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vessel an awful gust swept down upon the raft, and it was immediately overturned completely, every soul on it being tossed into the roaring waves. No one of them all escaped to land. Hardly an officer or a lady was now left upon the wreck.

The trembling survivors had for the most part taken refuge in the rigging or about the bowsprit. It was calculated that there were about a hundred so situated. Then came a crash—a piercing cry; the bowsprit had broken off short, carrying with it its living load. Many were flung off into the waters, others managed to cling desperately to the floating timber. The bowsprit drifted in towards the shore, and hopes arose in the breasts of the poor mortals upon it. Nearer to safety they approached; the Wall was all but reached. It was not to be; another mighty wave dashed resistlessly upon them and in an instant they were gone. The sea between wreck and shore was full of agonised and struggling beings. But it was for a few moments only; then all had been swept from sight. A touching spectacle was seen. Captain Scherman, like the colonel, was observed supporting his wife and endeavouring to swim. But at last he succumbed to the cold and fatigue, and seeing that all hope was gone, the man clasped his partner in close embrace, and the pair sank together.

Many of the survivors—if so small a remnant could be said to be many—were by this time more or less demented, and made the most frantic efforts to escape. Flinging himself upon any bit of wreckage that came to his hand, a man would float off, to be drowned before he had gone many yards. Several persons lost their lives by madness of this kind. Not more than forty or fifty of all the hundreds remained now.

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But an experience of a different kind came, and it was high time that something should come to put a little heart into the handful of survivors. A couple of men, who had lashed themselves to an empty hogshead, after terrible buffetings, and numberless tossings beneath the waves, by great good fortune touched the Wall, and were pulled out of danger. Standing on the dyke the two fortunate ones waved their caps to their brethren left on the wreck, and cheered. These were the first of all the *Vryheid's* company to be saved.

Marvellously comforted and heartened by this unlooked-for bit of success, small though it was, the thirty-three still upon the broken parts of the ship constructed a second raft, an awful sea running the while. As for the wreck itself, it had by this time parted into a hundred fragments, and no longer afforded shelter for the miserable beings upon it. Fearful though the risk was, therefore, every one of the remnant got upon the raft. It was pushed off, and progress was made through a sea rolling mountains high and ghastly with floating bodies. In spite of their utmost efforts, seventeen out of the thirty-three were swept off, while not a few of those left were badly injured from the contusions they received.

Amidst the most awful excitement among those watching from the shore, the raft neared the wall. Willing hands in plenty were ready; a hold was got, and the sixteen last survivors were hauled to land. With the two who had escaped on the hogshead, a total of eighteen persons had thus been saved out of a company of 454 all told—a pitiful remnant! Of the eighteen who escaped with their lives, eight were soldiers and ten seamen. Not a woman, not a child, not an officer, not a private passenger reached the shore alive.

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The people of the neighbourhood acted nobly, the towns of Hythe and Folkestone subscribing liberally for the benefit of the sufferers. Not a thing was stolen; even a chest containing a large sum of money remained for some time on the beach without being robbed.

Thus perished more than four hundred souls, the victims of greed and reckless unconcern on the part of those responsible.

CHAPTER VII

THE HONG KONG TYPHOON

What a typhoon is—Hong Kong, September 18th, 1906—The first news—Crowded harbour—The tornado comes with terrific force—Huge waves—Thousands of ships and boats sunk—A letter from an old schoolboy—The Governor's first report—An American steamer landed high beyond the sea-wall—Fearful loss of life—The *Fatshan* steamer—A plucky captain—A hundred and fifty lives saved by three men—The vessel safely beached—The *Heung Shan*—First mate swims ashore with line—Saves three hundred Chinese—Violence on board—Loss of life—A renewal of the storm—The Bishop among the victims—Splendid efforts of the authorities—The aftermath.

WHAT is a typhoon? The dictionary informs us that it is "a violent hurricane which occurs in the Chinese seas. Probably so called because thought to be the work of Typhon, a fabled giant." One of the most terrible instances of these dreaded Eastern hurricanes occurred at Hong Kong in September, 1906. "The typhoon is one of the most dreaded of anything connected with the Celestial's terrors," says one who was witness of the awful storm just referred to, "and I can quite understand the reason of his dread, for no one who has not seen a typhoon can possibly realise the awful effects which it produces." And certainly a more appalling catastrophe of the kind than that which befell the little British Colony on the occasion in question is hardly likely to be experienced again in our generation, it is fervently to be trusted.

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The earliest news of the disaster reached England by way of Manila, in the Philippines, where a startling telegram had been received from Hong Kong. It was about ten in the morning of September 18th, 1906, when the message reached Manila, and the typhoon was just over at the time. It had finished its fearful work of devastation and death, although it had not begun till the breakfast hour. The first message simply said that the storm had lasted two hours; that it had destroyed an immense amount of shipping and other property; that the loss of life was certainly very great; and that the damage would amount to a total of at least a million dollars—a concise but terrible message to be sent over the wires. Later accounts first doubled, then trebled, and finally magnified many times the earlier calculations as to the loss of life and property.

There had been nothing to foretell the advent of such a fearful tempest. The day before had been a perfect day; one who “lived to tell the tale” says he was out yachting on that day, going for a twenty-mile cruise, “on a lovely sea, with a perfect breeze.” The Observatory of Hong Kong, on the morning of the typhoon, issued no warning, merely intimating that the day was likely to be somewhat overcast. Loud complaints and many were afterwards made against the Observatory officials, but, as it abundantly appeared afterwards, they were in no way to blame, and the Governor publicly said as much after due inquiry. There was absolutely nothing to show that such an awful visitation was at hand; the suddenness with which the tempest began was absolute. “We had just started business,” wrote a gentleman who was resident there at the time, “when, without any warning whatever, a terrible gale swept down through the har-

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bour, and the water was immediately lashed into such a fury as beggars description."

It is difficult to realise the situation. The port of Hong Kong is crowded with shipping of all nationalities and builds; in the river lie thousands of Chinese boats, with their swarming populations going about their morning occupations as usual; off the coast, more especially between the island and the mainland, are numberless craft, huge liners, mailboats, sailing vessels, gunboats, launches of every description. The sea is almost unruffled, the breeze that stirs it only a faint one. All at once comes a change, and from the west there bears down upon land and sea alike the most terrific tornado seen within living memory, even in these typhoon-swept seas. Not a man of all the tens of thousands on land or water is expecting such a visitation, and consequently no preparation of any sort has been made to meet it.

No picture can portray, no pen can describe the scene that followed. The wind shrieked, the water was in a moment tossed into madness, huge waves rolled irresistibly towards the shore, often running far inland, and into the very streets of the town, crashing into the forest of masts, overwhelming the smaller craft instantly and driving the bigger ships headlong towards the beach or the cliffs, carrying many a vessel high out of the water altogether. Collisions between the driving ships were innumerable and in most cases disastrous. One telegram tells of vessels being cast ashore everywhere, and of wrecks piled up in the docks and along the sea-front, while craft, big and little, were carried into the very streets.

A few lines from the letter of an "old boy" to his school in England are worth quoting:—

"There are nearly four thousand junks and sampans

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always lying in the harbour, and each one carries from ten to twenty-five people, night and day. It was a pitiful sight to see these craft literally hurled through the waves just like pieces of cork, dashed from side to side, and striking either some big ship or the pier. It was so sickening to me to see these hapless men, women, and children blown from their junk or sampan that I had to turn away, or I should have lost my reason. Chinese babies are always strapped on their mother's back, and one can never forget the terrible sight of these helpless ones literally dashed to death. Men-of-war and large ocean liners were piled up, high and dry, ashore; while torpedo-boats and smaller craft were either sunk or smashed to pieces."

For an hour and a half or two hours the hurricane lasted, destruction at work the whole time. Panic took possession of the natives, and they were for the most part unable either to save themselves, or to render assistance to their neighbours. Appalling as the loss of life was, it would have been still worse but for the cool heads, the energy and resource, the grit and dash of the Europeans and Americans present. Many fine examples of pluck and devotion were seen and reported, and doubtless there were plenty more which never came to public knowledge. Yet how little could any assistance of man avail while the storm was at its worst! The crashing of vessel against vessel or against piers and walls; the howling of the hurricane; the shouts of men and the heartrending screams of women, as they were flung like straws upon the seething waters, to be instantly swallowed up without hope of rescue, these things must have unnerved many a strong man, and the more so, as no one could tell whither or to whom the tempest might not carry its ravages.

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The first report of the Governor to the Colonial Office at home was to the effect that fifteen European ships, ten river steamers, twenty launches, and a large number of smaller craft were either stranded or had been totally wrecked. This report referred, of course, only to the immediate neighbourhood of the shore. What the tale of lost ships and lost lives out at sea might be could not yet be ascertained, but it needed no great effort of the imagination to forecast the accounts that would presently be coming in. There was the fishing fleet, too, a very large company of boats, away and exposed to the full fury of the storm. Many hundreds of folk were fearing the worst for their friends and property away at the fishing station. As for the destruction on shore, it was enormous. The Commodore reported that roofs had been swept off in scores, buildings instantly levelled with the ground, piers smashed, sea-walls and defences damaged to an extraordinary extent.

Strange and exciting scenes were witnessed on every hand, and it is impossible to give in detail the thrilling story of each single ship and its terrible experiences. The *Monteagle*, a large steamer, was tossed ashore as if it had been a bit of stick, while the Canadian Pacific liner *Empress of India* managed to ride out of the greatest peril into safety, one of the very few cases where a large vessel got off safely and undamaged. A still more extraordinary spectacle was witnessed in the Kowloon quarter, on the mainland. Here a big American steamer, the *S. P. Hitchcock*, was carried with a sweep towards the great sea-wall, and with one mighty heave was lifted bodily on to the top, and finally landed, high and dry, beyond. Similar things were seen, however, all along the coast. For many a huge vessel a channel had afterwards



THE AWFUL POWER OF THE TYPHOON

Huge iron vessels were tossed about like corks, and crushed like egg-shells, while some were literally ground to pieces during the storm at Hong-Kong.



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to be cut to enable the ship to get back to her own element, a heavy cost in time and money. The Nord-Deutscher-Lloyd *Prince Waldemar*, a vessel of large size, drove along with resistless force, crashing through the wooden piers as if they had been matchwood. A launch some distance off the shore was caught, and in a moment it was shattered and swamped, every person on board perishing. They were all Chinese, and numbered a hundred and thirty all told.

The story of the *Fatshan*, a steam vessel belonging to the Hong Kong-Canton Company, is one of the more remarkable, though the number of "incidents" that occurred during the hurricane was naturally very large. The *Fatshan*, caught by the storm, was blown against the French mail steamer *Polynesien*, and a violent collision ensued. Captain Thomas, the skipper of the *Fatshan*, and two of his officers were whites, the rest of the crew were all natives. Two men were killed in the accident, and others, including the captain, injured. At once the *Fatshan* was in the utmost peril, and so serious did the state of things appear to the Chinese, that they fell into a panic, and one and all scrambled pell-mell into the Frenchman. Captain Thomas, himself injured, was left with his mate and the engineer to manage the ship. With marvellous pluck he stood for Shelter Bay, where he hoped to find the tempest raging less furiously. Soon he met with a Chinese vessel in distress, and at once attempted to render assistance. For more than an hour and a half the *Fatshan* stood by, as near as was safe, in that frightful sea; it was wonderful that she in her damaged condition held together for so long. The three gallant fellows on board of her had their reward, saving fully a hundred and fifty of the Chinamen. They had

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done a deed that was almost unique, one would think. As Captain Thomas neared the land, he perceived how great was his danger, and how difficult it would be to save his ship. Then it was he showed his fine seamanship, for in spite of the driving hurricane he managed to pick and choose his ground, and at length ran her ashore at a favourable spot; in fact, it was afterwards reported that the skipper had successfully beached his vessel, a great relief after the first account, to the effect that the *Fatshan* had been driven ashore and had become a total wreck.

But there were other notable rescues. A Japanese steamer saved a crew of sixty-six Chinese together with an English pilot who was on board. There was a large steamer, the *Heung Shan*, homeward bound from Macao, with as many as seventeen hundred passengers on her. The tempest struck her and she stranded off Lantgo Island. The captain lost no time in sending his second mate with ten seamen in a boat to Hong Kong to fetch help. In such a sea it is not to be wondered that the boat drifted for about fourteen hours, the men unable to make the port, and they were at last fortunately picked up by the steamer *Hankow*. During this time the first mate of the *Heung Shan*, with splendid courage, fastening a line about him, flung himself into the raging sea and made for the shore. By wonderful good fortune he succeeded in reaching the land with his line. A rope was at once passed along between ship and shore, and communication thus established, the passengers were sent one by one out of the vessel. The work was persevered in till the gallant officer had the satisfaction of saving some three hundred souls. The mate now returned to his ship, presumably because of the strange reports that had reached him of the doings on board. When he arrived

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he found that some of the passengers had become violent, and were careering about the ship with knives, threatening and robbing. No doubt they had become demoralised and desperate, seeing that it would be impossible to save more than a fraction of those on board, while the ship itself was in such a hopeless condition. The Europeans on board the *Heung Shan* were fortunately all saved, including three ladies. The bulk of the Chinese, with the exception of the three hundred rescued by the mate's efforts, were all drowned.

At midnight there was a renewal of the storm. For six hours the tempest raged again, though with nothing like the fury of the morning's typhoon. Next day reports began to reach the town from some of the outlying quarters, and the Governor was able to make a rough estimate as to the probable total loss of life and property. He set down the number of deaths as about five thousand, nearly all of natives, a figure that unhappily proved to be far short of the true one. Ship after ship was reported lost with all hands. One of the saddest accounts came from the fishing waters. Practically the entire fishing fleet of the port, to the number of six hundred boats, had been lost. This frightful disaster at once brought up the total of known deaths to ten thousand, and no doubt there were many more of which no account was or could be taken.

The loss amongst the Europeans and Americans was, as has been already said, very small. But there were losses, and some of them peculiarly sad ones. Among the Englishmen who perished was the respected Bishop of Hong Kong, Dr. Hoare. He was out on one of his missionary rounds in his houseboat when the storm came upon him so suddenly. He lashed himself to the mast for

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greater security, but the craft was overwhelmed and the occupants perished. It was on the mainland, at a place called Castle Peak Bay, a dozen miles from Hong Kong itself, that the *Pioneer*, the Bishop's yacht, foundered. A Government launch was placed at the disposal of Mrs. Hoare, who went out in search of her husband. For a time his fate was not certain, though the worst was feared, as his boat was found stranded. Then one of his boots and his Bible were picked up, and these finds unfortunately left no room for doubt.

An English couple, with their child, were among the victims, and theirs was a very sad case among many others equally sad. They had gone off, like a good many others, for a few days' holiday on a launch, were taken unawares, and all lost. A number of Sunday holiday-makers were amongst those who lost their lives. Altogether there were about twenty English drowned. There were also a few French, including a couple of the officers and three of the men belonging to a torpedo-boat.

The authorities, the moment it was possible to do anything, set about the work of saving and helping and relieving. The native Chinese, the victims of a hopeless fatalism, simply resigned themselves to the inevitable, as they conceived it, and made few efforts to save those in danger. And when the fate of friends became certain, and even when the dead bodies were brought in, the survivors showed no signs of grief, but accepted the blow without a sigh or a tear. The Government and the harbour officials did their utmost to clear away the wreckage, to repair damage, to succour the injured, the homeless, the destitute. A subscription list was opened, and before long help began to pour in also from England and from other countries.

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“The harbour is now one mass of wreckage,” writes the same old schoolboy whose testimony has been cited before. “Here and there one can see a funnel or a mast, stretching up a few feet out of the water, for many of the ships sank with all hands. The aftermath of this terrible disaster began to come upon us with full force yesterday, two days after the occurrence, when the corpses began to be washed up. Over six hundred and fifty were recovered yesterday, and that is a very small part of the total, for it is estimated that fully ten thousand souls have perished.”

CHAPTER VIII

A SCENE ON THE DOGGERBANK

The Doggerbank—The Hull fleets—Russian Baltic fleet on its way to Japan—A bad attack of nerves—The warships approach—Search-lights turned on—Firing suddenly commenced—Showers of shot and shell—The *Moulmein* and the *Mino*—The *Swift* and its skipper—A terrible scene on board the *Crane*—Death of the skipper and mate—The vessel sinking—*Gull* comes up to help—An awful spectacle—Firing suddenly stopped—The report of the doctor on the Hospital Mission ship—Russians steam away—Indignation universal—The Russian version of the story—All their own fault !

THERE is little need to explain where and what the Doggerbank is, for everybody has heard of this great fishing ground in the North Sea. The bank is situated about midway between our own shores and those of Holland and the Jutland peninsula. It is a large shoal, in shape roughly rhomboidal, and it is probably the submerged remnant of the land that once occupied the site of the present German Ocean, in the far-back days when the Thames was a tributary of the Rhine, and their joint waters, together with those of the Elbe and many another stream, made their way northward into the Atlantic beyond the limits of our island group. To the Doggerbank resort large fishing fleets, more especially, in our own country, from Hull and Grimsby and Yarmouth. Immense quantities of fish are every day brought from the Doggerbank ; indeed, the sight of the far-famed Fish

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Pontoon at Grimsby, for instance, when the trawlers are in, is one to fill the stranger with astonishment, and it certainly cannot be matched elsewhere in the world. It is not many years ago when the fishing fleets consisted entirely of sailing vessels, but in our days the steam trawler has almost altogether ousted the sailing craft from the Doggerbank ground.

On the night of October 20th, 1904, there was a goodly company of these steam fishing vessels at work out there. They belonged mainly to two Hull fleets, the Game Cock and the Great Northern, and the total craft present numbered about a hundred and sixty. The night was dark and somewhat hazy, yet not inconveniently so, large objects being discernible at a distance of a quarter of a mile or thereabouts. The ships' lights were all in order, the men busy pursuing their toilsome and hazardous calling by the help of the brilliant acetylene lamps that flooded the decks with light. The admiral of the fleet, as ever, is watchful over the crowd of vessels and the hundreds of lives depending on his care and vigilance. The Hospital Mission ship is in the midst of the crowd, the doctor ready to attend to the injured and the sick, the missionary to the spiritual needs of the toilers of the deep. There is, in short, nothing to mark this particular night from any other of the season.

Meanwhile the Baltic Fleet of Russia, under the command of Admiral Rozhdestvensky, is on its way to Japan, to take part in the war there, and it is passing across the North Sea at this very time. The Russians are despondent, for their country has sustained disastrous defeats, by both land and sea, at the hands of the Japanese. Moreover, all sorts of wild rumours are afloat as to the fleets of torpedo-boats that have been sent out by the enemy,

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to stop, and if possible destroy, the Russian ships on their passage. The nerves of almost every man on the Russian vessels would seem to have become thoroughly unstrung, not even excepting the Admiral in supreme command. All sorts of wild and improbable stories have been circulating, and believed, as to the nearness of the ubiquitous Japs. Their torpedo-boats had been looked for in the very waters of the Baltic itself; then it had been certain that there were submarine mines laid in the Sound; off the Skaw somebody had actually seen the enemy's ships! Such are the tales going round the Russian fleet. The Danes had laughed at the nervous Russians and their dread of the Japanese warships, which existed in their own imagination only, so far as those waters were concerned.

That panic prevailed in every part of the fleet, and all day and all night long, was afterwards abundantly acknowledged by the Russians themselves. The testimony of their engineer-in-chief, to cite no other, is conclusive on this point. Over and over again, in his account of the voyage of the Baltic Fleet (*From Libau to Tsushima*), he makes notes of this kind. "Panic prevails on board." "All were in a state of nervous tension and panic." And quite early in the voyage the order had been given "to train all guns on every passing vessel"! To make the situation more strange, the fleet was miles out of its proper course. The Admiral had chosen, for some unknown reason, to describe "an obtuse angle instead of a straight line." Such was the state of things at midnight.

About one in the morning of Saturday, October 21st, the Doggerbank fishing fleets saw a number of big black objects looming through the darkness and the slight haze.

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These were soon seen to be warships. The first portion of the oncoming fleet stopped and turned a number of powerful searchlights full on the fishing-smacks, dazzling the eyes of the men at work in them. The inspection lasted some little time, giving the Russians ample opportunity to ascertain the nature of the Doggerbank fleet and how the men were engaged. About this there could be no manner of doubt, however. The warships then sailed round the fishing vessels, evidently with the intention of ascertaining how many they were and whether they were all genuine fishermen. The close inspection ended, the Russians sailed on their way southwards.

Shortly afterwards the second portion of the war fleet came up, and again the searchlights were turned on. This time the Russians seemed to be about to pass right through the middle of the fishing craft, and the admiral of the trawling fleets sent up a couple of green rockets as an instruction to his men to move away a little to starboard, so as to be more out of the way of the battleships. To the surprise of the Englishmen these ships now drew up in battle order, having, however, already fouled some of the nets. In the case of one of the Russian vessels, it was afterwards ascertained, the screw had become entangled in and for a time stopped by fishing tackle.

Suddenly there is a flash, a thundering boom. Another follows, and then another. The fishermen are delighted. Here is Lord Charles Beresford with his squadron, and the Hull men are lucky enough to be in at the very beginning of a striking series of night manœuvres by British men-of-war! It is a treat in store! Such are the first thoughts of the workers as they rest for a moment to look at the display. So little notion have they as to the nationality of the battleships and the real nature of the

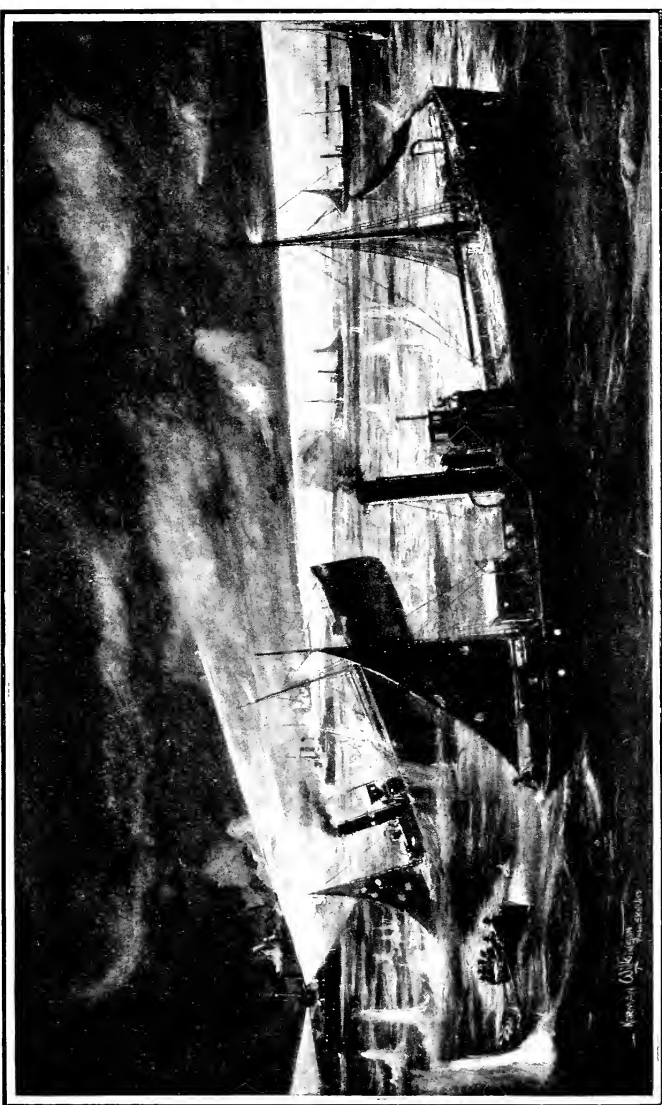
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attack. The poor fellows are speedily undeceived. Something strikes the water with a splash near one of the trawlers. For an instant the men look one another in the face in wonderment. Then there is a scream that rends the air, followed by a tremendous explosion up above, and the deck of the fisher ship is swept by a shower of shot! It is a shell that has been fired and has burst! For a moment the thought runs through the minds of the fishing crews that Lord Charles's men must be drunk.

By this time there was a veritable sea-fight going on, if that could be called a fight in which one side was composed entirely of defenceless fishermen. Shot and shell whizzed through the air, and vessel after vessel was struck, the decks being riddled by the deadly hail from the guns. The fishermen as a rule ran below, thunderstruck and in mortal terror, as they might well be, ignorant who was the enemy, for what purpose the bombardment had been ordered, or how the matter would end.

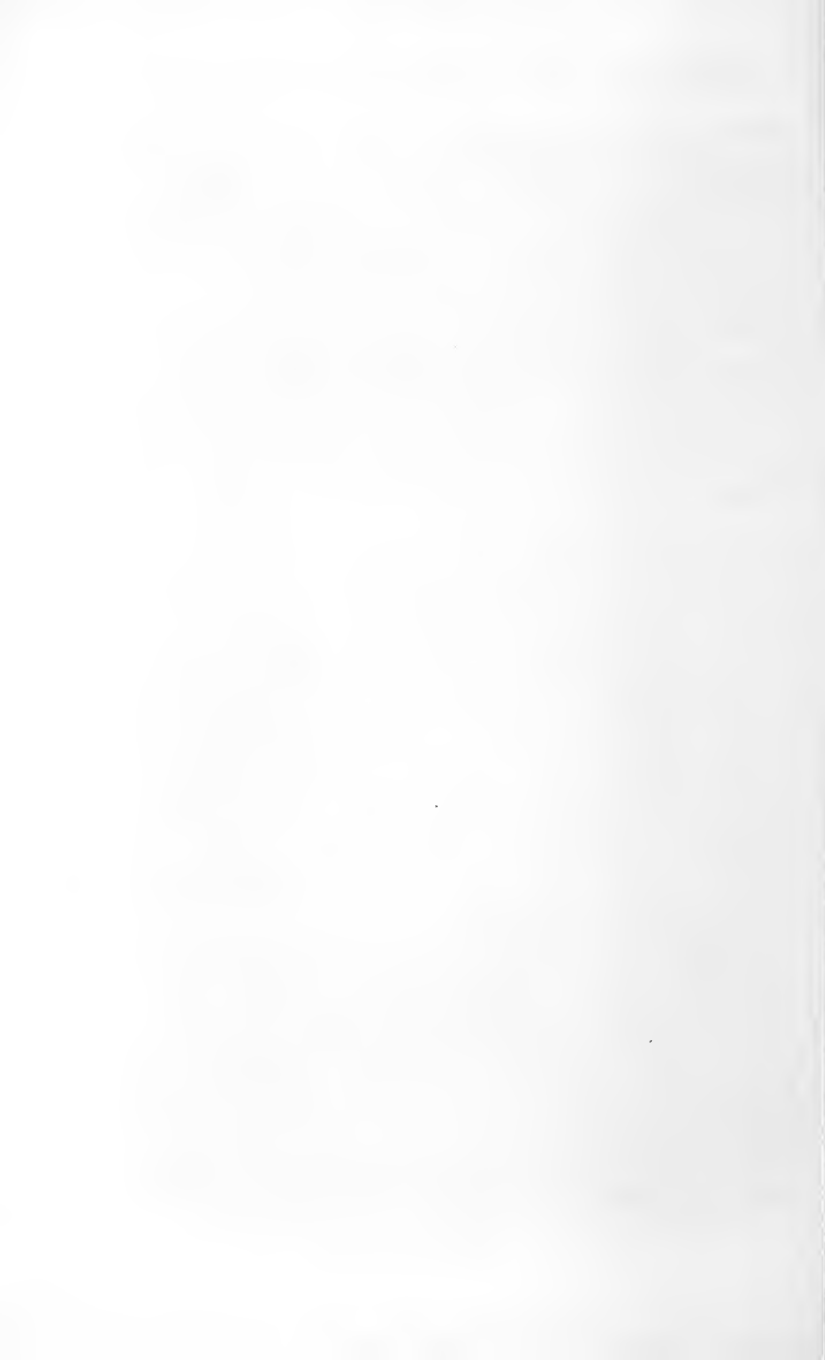
The scene is without a parallel in all the annals of the sea. A crowd of inoffensive and unarmed men quietly engaged in their ordinary toil, and on their accustomed ground, the place in the middle of the ocean and hundreds of miles from their homes, the darkness and thickness of the night, the men thinking of anything but war, for their country is at peace. Then shot and shell flying in scores through the air, the thunder of battle, ships damaged and disabled, men wounded or killed lying prostrate on their decks, the groans of the injured, the general consternation and terror—surely the like of this has never before been witnessed on any waters!

Two of the fishing vessels, the *Moulmein* and the *Mino*, were close to each other when the bombardment began. One of the first of the shots passed clean through



AN UNPARALLELED SCENE

When the second division of the Russian fleet came up, searchlights were turned on, then shot and shell whizzed through the air, and trawler after trawler was struck. Upon the *Cran* fell the worst of the injuries, and she soon sank.



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the former, entering on the port side and going out on the starboard side. The *Mino* at the same time was swept by a hot fire, and the hull was badly damaged. In fact, on examination afterwards, it was found that the vessel had as many as sixteen holes in her. Most of these were fortunately above the water-line, but there was one nasty hole just below it. The skipper, with quick presence of mind, seized a piece of wood and plugged up the hole, thus saving his vessel. Luckily none of the men on these two trawlers received much injury from the shot, though the trimmer of the *Mino* was wounded by the flying splinters.

Another trawler has its story told by its skipper; this was the carrier *Swift*. Says Captain Fletcher, "I had altered the course towards the west, so as to give the warships a wider berth, when a shell struck the water a few feet from our port bow, and, bursting, gave us a drenching. I shouted to the crew that the warships were firing shells, so that they might lie down. I stuck to the bridge, but took care to get behind the funnel and the ventilator, so that I might at least have them between me and damage. The firing lasted for a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes. And now their shot whizzed between the wires over the bridge, a foot or two from my head. We could see the flash of guns from four different ships."

Cries were heard from the trawler *Crane* of the Game Cock fleet. Terrible things were happening there. Upon this vessel fell the worst of the injuries inflicted by the Russians. The boatswain was badly hurt and others of the crew received injuries. Then came a couple of shots which instantly carried off the heads of the skipper and the second mate. Their comrades were struck with horror when they saw the headless trunks lying on the deck.

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Meanwhile the ill-fated trawler was being made a chief target for the guns, as it would appear, and soon the second engineer reported that she was sinking. Shouts were raised for assistance from the other boats.

The son of the skipper, Smith, was asleep when the bombardment began, but the din awoke him and he rushed on deck. A terrible experience was his. There, in a pool of blood, lay the headless body of his father, and, hard by, the body of the mate likewise decapitated. The engineer had a wound in the chest, another of the crew had his hand shot off. Young Smith himself had a very narrow escape. The instant he appeared on deck a shot whistled close to his head, fortunately leaving him quite uninjured. The lamp near which he was standing at the time was smashed by the missile. As the vessel was fast sinking a dash was made for the boat. To the dismay of the men it was found that the windlass rope had been shot away, and that the boat could not be lowered. Here was a crew of injured men on board a sinking ship, under the deadly fire of warships in the darkness of the night, and no boat available for rescue. Truly all the elements of horror were here in all their terrible force.

One of the seamen seized a red lamp and waved it as a signal of distress. It says everything for the pluck of the Hull fishers when, amidst all the terrors and dangers of the situation, assistance came at once. The *Gull* was speedily alongside, and every man on board the *Crane* was taken off, the mutilated bodies of skipper and mate being also carried away. Within a short space of time after the rescue the trawler sank. Captain Green, of the *Gull*, afterwards stated that the spectacle when he reached the sinking ship was "awful," and the

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word is the only one that could have been used to describe it.

Thomas, the third hand of the *Mandalay*, had meanwhile his share of excitement. He had gone up into the rigging to get a better look at the warships, when suddenly shot began to fly thick about him, and live shells burst in the air above his head. He seems to have remained on the watch somewhere all through the firing, which, as all the witnesses agreed, went on for about twenty minutes. At length a white signal followed closely by a red was given by the Russians, and the cannonading stopped as suddenly as it had begun.

A strange part of the story remains to be told. After this extraordinary and deadly attack, during which from two to three hundred shot and shell were fired, the warships steamed away after the first portion of the fleet, in the direction of the Channel, without sending a single boat to help the injured, or making a word of inquiry as to the effect of the action. As one of the Hull men declared, "they went off without in the least troubling themselves about the damage." Nor was this all. It came out subsequently that the Russians left behind one of their ships, to keep an eye on the fishing fleet, and that this ship remained on the spot till six in the morning. Yet not a move was made to render assistance to the Englishmen. "Drunk or scared" was the general comment among the fishermen, when, later, they learnt who were their assailants; and the evidence afterwards forthcoming left no doubt as to which of the two it was. At daybreak that same morning the Russians were seen passing Dover.

As soon as possible the injured from the various trawlers were taken on board the Hospital Mission ship

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Joseph and Sarah Miles. Dr. Anklesaria, the fleet surgeon, had already been over to the *Crane* to render what help he could, and he declared that he had never witnessed such a "gory sight" as he did there. "Two men lay on the deck with their heads nearly blown to pieces. In the cabin the scene was more heartrending still, when I saw six men stretched about anyhow, bleeding, and groaning with the agony of their wounds. With all these wounded men on board, our floating hospital looked like a veritable battlefield. Indeed, it presented a most pathetic sight. It kept me busy with knife and needle the whole day." The total number of the injured was fifteen or sixteen.

Rarely has the port of Hull been more excited than it was next day, when the *Moulmein* and the *Mino* arrived there badly damaged, flags flying at half-mast, and two dead and mutilated bodies on board. The news soon spread, and in a short time a great crowd had gathered. The tale the fishers told was one that in itself could scarce have commanded belief. But here were the sad proofs of its truth, the headless corpses, the shattered trawlers, the sixteen holes in the *Mino*, the bits of shrapnel and other grim reminders of the attack which some of the men had brought. The indignation was naturally intense, and though no wild language was indulged in, there was a unanimous demand for full satisfaction for the outrage.

The skippers of the *Moulmein* and the *Mino*, with others, were at once summoned to London to tell their story to the authorities at the Foreign Office. The King promptly sent a gracious message of sympathy to the friends of the killed and wounded, and another of an official nature to the Russian Government, the exact

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import of the latter communication being unknown to the general public, of course. Our own Government took up the matter at once, and with energy. They had photographs taken of the deceased, just as they were. The pictures showed knives and pieces of fish still in the hands of the poor fellows, proof positive to all men that the fishers had been quietly pursuing their ordinary occupation at the moment the firing had opened upon them.

The news quickly ran all over Europe and America, and every newspaper commented upon it. The condemnation of the warship crews was universal. But the indignation was mingled with astonishment that the responsible authorities could in our day have made so astounding and deplorable a blunder. The whole thing seemed inexplicable, in fact, in this enlightened twentieth century, and on a sea that was perfectly known, or should have been known, to every European mariner. Russia herself presently sent a message to the effect that compensation would be made, but our country at large was not at all disposed to be satisfied with that alone. How for a short time it seemed possible that grave complications might arise out of this sad incident, and how the matter was finally settled, it is not the business of this chapter to tell.

Thus far we have considered only the English version of the story. But it is confirmed in a striking manner by the entries in the diary made at the time by the Russian Engineer-in-Chief. We may venture to quote a few sentences from the book already mentioned, *From Libau to Tsushima*. The Engineer says: "About 1 a.m. they sounded off quarters, having seen ships ahead. They let the ships get nearer, and then there began . . .

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“What it was words fail to describe! All the ships of our division were ablaze. The noise of the firing was incessant. The searchlights were turned on. I was on the after bridge, and was positively blinded and deafened by the firing. I put my hands to my ears and bolted below. The rest I watched from the spardeck, out of the accommodation-ladder port.

“A small steamer was rolling helplessly on the sea. One funnel, a bridge, and the red and black paint on her side were clearly visible. I saw no one on deck—they had probably hidden themselves below in terror. First one, then another projectile from our ship struck this unfortunate steamer. I saw there was an explosion. The order to cease firing was given, but the other ships continued to fire and no doubt sank the steamer. A second and third steamer, not having any one on deck, rolled helplessly in the same fashion. . . .

“Imagine the feelings of the people in these ships! They were, no doubt, fishermen. Now there will be a universal scandal.”

But the diarist goes on to add that the fishermen had only themselves to blame! They knew the Russian fleet was coming, and they should have got out of the way. The Engineer-in-Chief forgot, to say nothing more, that his warships were a good forty miles out of the course they should have taken!

CHAPTER IX

THE WRECK OF AN EAST INDIAMAN

Two East Indiamen, a contrast—The *Halsewell*—A fine ship—A gale in the Channel—On a lee shore—Five feet of water in the hold—Fall of the mainmast—Driving fast on a rock-bound coast—Ship strikes—An affrighted party in the round-house—Men leap over the side—Attempts to get a spar to the cliff—Brave attempt by the first mate—First mate slips into sea—Hurled into a cavern—Seized by unseen hands—Escape on a hen-coop—The final catastrophe—A night in a miserable cave—A perilous climb—Rescue by quarrymen—The rescued.

IN another chapter is recorded the loss of a worn-out and unseaworthy vessel which had formerly been an East Indiaman ; in the present chapter the story is to be told of the wreck of one of the finest ships of her day owned by the Company. The *Melville Castle*, rechristened by her Dutch buyers the *Vryheid*, was a veritable “coffin ship,” a mass of rotten timbers painted to look like new ; was ill-found, badly equipped, indifferently manned ; was, in short, a case as glaring as it was deplorable of a reckless or penny-wise-pound-foolish policy on the part of the Amsterdam company who had bought her. The *Halsewell*, East Indiaman, of which we are now to speak, was the exact reverse of all this. She was one of the finest vessels afloat, in a condition of perfect repair, excellently equipped, and officered by some of the most skilful and gallant seamen of their day. Nothing had been neglected that money or skill could suggest or provide. Yet she,

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too, was fated to be lost on her outward voyage, and within sight of our own shores.

It was on New Year's Day, 1786, when the *Halsewell* left the Thames, and sailed through the Downs on her way to the East. She was of about 750 tons burden, and was captained by Richard Pierce, while others of her officers were Mr. Meriton, Mr. Rogers, and Mr. Brimer, splendid fellows all. The ship carried out to India a number of soldiers, for the Company's service it need hardly be explained, for every one is aware how "John Company" ruled in his Eastern preserve till the Honourable East India Company was superseded in its ruling functions by the British Government itself. There were about 250 souls on board altogether, including two daughters and two nieces of the commander, as well as three other ladies.

Passengers and crew sailed under the best of auspices; they had a beautiful and well-found ship, an ample crew splendidly officered; in some cases children were with parents, husbands with wives, relatives with relatives. Here was a young girl, her education in England finished, joyfully returning to her father and mother out in India; there was a successful merchant voyaging to the East just once more to settle his business affairs and to gather the last of the fruits of his enterprise and industry. As for the soldiers, were they not bound for a land where promotions, rewards, honours were to be earned? One officer, at least, was newly married. Many a soul there was full of high hopes.

The Channel had hardly been entered before a strong east wind began to blow, and this, veering to the south, soon increased in force. By January 3rd it had grown to the proportions of a heavy gale, and the strength of the

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storm still increasing, Captain Pierce began to be a little anxious. Here he was sailing, as he must do for a considerable time, along a lee shore and a dangerous coast. To keep off this shore was the all-important point, and it was only to be done by crowding on a quantity of sail. The *Halsewell* laboured heavily, the seas sweeping her decks every minute. Fearing that she must have shipped a good deal of water, the commander had the well sounded, and to his dismay found five feet of water in the hold. The pumps were immediately manned and vigorously worked, and at the same time an attempt was made to furl the mainsail and the maintop-sail. In spite of every effort, however, this could not be done.

For the next two days passengers and crew spent a miserable time. Without cessation the hurricane raged, though at times its force lessened perceptibly, yet only to break out again with greater violence than before. Matters went from bad to worse. Seven feet of water were reported in the hold, and notwithstanding constant labour at the pumps, the depth was increasing, the men being unable to cope with it. The captain ordered the mizenmast to be cut away, but this not giving the advantage expected, he proceeded to remove the mainmast also. This, it need hardly be said, was a most hazardous operation in such a tempest; but the vessel was in the utmost danger, and the task must be undertaken. Unfortunately, in its fall the mast carried away five men, one the coxswain, and these unhappy fellows were drowned in the sight of their comrades, who were utterly unable to render them any aid. These were the first deaths, and the moral effect on the rest was disheartening in the extreme. However, the ship's head was now got round, a thing that had been impossible while the masts stood,

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and the vessel ran before the wind. Not only was the commander enabled to keep his ship off the shore more easily, but the men at the pumps found themselves masters of the water in the hold.

A jury mainmast was now rigged up, and then a jury mizen, and all on board began to hope that the worst was past. Their hopes were destined to be dashed almost at once. Suddenly the foretop-mast snapped under the force of the tempest, and fell with a crash, tearing the sail to rags. Thus matters stood when the night came on. Next morning both St. Alban's Head and Portland Bill were perceived, and these at no great distance away. The coast was a dangerous one. The bower anchor was thrown out; it dragged at first and then for a time held. For a couple of hours the *Halsewell* rode the storm, and another night came down upon the now terrified company. Their terror was not without justification. They were close to a rock-bound coast, on which they were fast driving, through a sea that was lashed into frenzy by the howling and shrieking tempest. To have launched a boat would have been madness; the craft would have been immediately hurled with overpowering force on the iron cliffs that reared their heads aloft. To escape from the ship was impossible, to remain in it was almost equally fatal. Despair by this time had entered the breasts of all save the boldest spirits.

Captain Pierce now called up his chief mate, Mr. Meriton, for a consultation as to the best course to pursue. The skipper, poor fellow, was a thousand times more anxious on his daughters' account than his own. Any course that gave promise of saving them he would welcome. Meriton gave a candid answer to the captain's question, a hard thing to do under circumstances so

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appalling, but the right thing to be done by an officer as honourable as he was skilful and considerate.

"Is there any way, can you devise any means whatever, of saving my two poor girls?" Captain Pierce inquired with bursting heart.

"None, I fear; none! We can but wait till morning light and see if any way offers itself then."

Till morning! The poor father clasped his hands in despair. The time was two o'clock on a wild January morning. Daybreak was still five hours or more away, and all the time the vessel was driving fast and helplessly upon the rocky cliffs of the Isle of Purbeck!

Soon the *Halsewell* struck, and that so suddenly and with such violence as to throw down every soul standing at the time, some being severely bruised. The crash was awful, and the shrieks of the affrighted women and the hoarse cries of the men almost drowned the howling of the storm winds and the thunder of the waves that lashed the rocks. It was very dark, yet not so dark but that the people on board could make out, with horror-stricken eyes, the iron and perpendicular cliffs that loomed dimly before them, and towered up far above their heads, till they seemed to be lost in and confounded with the general blackness on high.

The portion of the story that is now to be told is harrowing to the last degree, as what terrible story of shipwreck is not! But it is relieved by examples of bravery, of endurance, of unselfishness, as bright as any in the annals of seafaring. Only one small speck dims the splendour of the record. For a little while some of the sailors had skulked, a man here and there refusing to do his duty at the pumps. But the fearful shock with which the vessel struck the rocks brought all hands to

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their senses, and from that time they endeavoured manfully to second the efforts of their officers. The men swarmed on deck, to find the ship beating violently against the rocks, each crash seeming only too surely the last, for she must inevitably be dashed to pieces and sink a mass of wreckage into the surging waves. It was too late to be of help now, and presently the *Halsewell* bulged out and settled down, her broadside to the lofty cliff face.

Mr. Meriton was among his men, and by his advice they congregated at the low side of the vessel, towards the shore, ready to take any opportunity, however full of risk, that might occur of getting upon the rocks. Huddled there, their eyes trying in vain to see something of the sheer black cliffs that frowned so close, and were yet so hard to reach, the men were left for a while by the gallant mate.

This devoted fellow made his way as best he could in the shrieking blast and the sweeping waves to the round-house, where were gathered about fifty people, including the ladies, the passengers, the commander, and several other officers. Meriton found the men with splendid courage and unselfishness trying to comfort and to cheer the ladies, disregarding their own extreme danger. The captain sat with his two girls, one on either side and pressed close to his breast, endeavouring to put heart into them, even when he saw not a ray of hope. Meriton lit all the candles and lanterns he could lay hands on, and bestirred himself to minister to the ladies. He found that they were suffering from thirst; they were, in fact, parched with much weeping. Suddenly remembering where there were some oranges on board, he went off in search of them, in spite of the fearful risk he ran, and in spite of the cries and protests of the rest. Good fortune

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attended his energy and pluck, and he soon returned with the fruit and prevailed on the unhappy women to allay their thirst with them.

But the second officer could not be content to remain in the round-house. While he had been fetching the oranges he had made a terrifying discovery. He found that the *Halsewell* had broken in two amidships. The fore part had been swung by the waves a little farther away from the shore, and lay at an angle to the after portion. Accordingly Meriton rushed back to the men, whom he now found swarming in numbers over the lower side of the vessel, frantically endeavouring to reach the black mass of cliff which they could faintly discern a few yards away. It was truly a leap in the dark for those luckless soldiers and sailors, and many a man sprang to his death, as the ever-recurring shrieks only too surely told. How many were drowned, how many were dashed to pieces on the jagged rocks, how many managed to cling to the sides, cannot be known. But Mr. Meriton was determined, if possible, to find a safer way to shore for the poor fellows.

He first thought of the flagstaff, and the pole was laid from the ship's side, in the hope that it would reach to the face of the cliff. It fell short. Undeterred, the mate seized a lantern and began a search for something longer. He found a spar, and with a will the men helped to lay this across. To their joy they found, or believed they found, that it rested on the rocks, but it was too dark to see whether this were actually the case. Allowing none but himself to risk his life, the heroic Meriton crept out into darkness, clinging desperately to the spar along which he crawled, the boiling sea below him. It was a moment of awful suspense. Suddenly a startled

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cry rang out, and the men still on board knew that the gallant officer had come unexpectedly to the end of the spar and had slipped off into the raging waves. They knew nothing as to his subsequent struggles, and feared the worst for him. As a matter of fact, however, the man was battling for dear life. Hurlled hither and thither, tossed upon this rock and upon that, Meriton was soon a mass of bruises. Still he fought gallantly on, every moment growing more and more exhausted. Then all at once, just as he was lapsing into unconsciousness, he was carried by the waves into some great hollow at the foot of the cliffs. He could feel that he was being flung into a cavern, and the next instant he was thrown with violence against the farther wall of it. The recoil of the waves was about to suck him back to despair and to death—for he was now entirely powerless to help himself, though he had laid hold for an instant on a bit of projecting rock—when he felt himself grasped by a hand in the darkness. Whose hand it was in that dark surge-beaten cave he could not know, but taking heart again, the mate renewed his struggles, and at length found himself seated on a rough ledge just out of reach of the waves.

Meanwhile those in the round-house had become intensely alarmed by the long absence of Mr. Meriton, and Mr. Rogers, the third officer, volunteered to go in search of him, an attempt the rest would not hear of. But presently Captain Pierce himself, lantern in hand, accompanied Rogers to the ship's side. The fitful glare served only to show the black cliff towering far above them, and without an inch of discernible foothold. Of the yawning cave just below they saw nothing, and of course suspected nothing. The commander did not need his mate's sorrowful assurance that there was absolutely nothing to be

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done on behalf of the ladies, and he returned to the round-house hopeless but resigned, determined to hold his children enfolded in his arms till the last and perish with them. All the while he manfully endeavoured to keep back his tears, so that the sight of them should not distress still more his unhappy girls. A braver and more loving father never lived. Who can picture that scene in the round-house, as parent and child, hand clasped in hand, and surrounded by shrieking and despairing men and women, sat to await the inevitable awful end? Every few minutes there was a louder crash, as some portion of the wreck parted from the rest, each catastrophe accompanied by agonised cries from those who believed the moment to be their last.

Alarmed by the violent movements of that part of the vessel, Mr. Rogers, with another officer or two, ran to the poop. Scarcely had they gained it when an appalling crash was heard, and the screams of the ladies told that the round-house had given way, and that the water had reached them. The men on the poop could do nothing for the poor wretches, however, and Rogers and his friend and fellow-officer Brimer hastily seized a hencoop as an enormous wave bore down upon them. With one sweep every man in the poop was flung into the sea, all to perish, save the two who had grasped the coop. Like straws Rogers and Brimer were hurled far into the cavern, of whose existence they had previously known nothing whatever. They were terribly bruised, and narrowly escaped instant destruction on the jagged edges of the rocks. Like Mr. Meriton, however, they were seized by unseen hands, and found themselves seated, with a number of others. Soon, to their exceeding joy, they heard the voice of their comrade and friend, who

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was some twenty men away from them, but on the same precarious ledge.

A deplorable situation truly was it for them all, even although they had gained a spot for a time out of the reach of the waves. They were drenched, shivering with cold, in the darkness, and feared to move an inch lest they should fall to their destruction! And it was only low tide, too! What when the flood came again? Maddened by the thought of what would then be their fate, some of the poor fellows attempted to reach a higher and safer position along the walls of the cave. Hardly any succeeded in this; one by one they dropped with piercing cries into the horrible unseen breakers below. Their miserable companions could only cling more desperately than ever to their little shelf, putting off to the latest moment possible the dreadful end which alone they could expect. A portion of the ship was faintly discernible, even from the rear of the cavern, and the men, their thoughts on those who had been in the round-house, fervently trusted that it would hold together at least till morning light, when it might be possible to do something to save the ladies. Every gallant fellow's heart was torn by the thought of what he knew the weak and helpless women must be enduring of anguish both bodily and mental. Meriton and Brimer feared the very worst, and none can wonder at it.

"Alas! too soon were their apprehensions realised! A few minutes after Mr. Rogers had gained the rock, a general shriek, in which the voice of female distress was distinguishable, announced the dreadful catastrophe! In a few moments all was hushed, except the warring winds and the dashing waves. The wreck was overwhelmed in the bosom of the deep, and not an atom of it was ever

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discovered. Thus perished the *Halsewell*, and with her, worth, honour, skill, beauty, and accomplishments." How dreadful all this must have been to the remnant still clinging to the sides of the black cavern none can realise, save the very few who have gone through a like experience and lived. The thought of the gallant mariner father clasping his children to his bosom to the last must have been uppermost in Meriton's mind.

With wearying, prostrating tardiness did the day break on that bleak and tempestuous January morning. The first streaks served to reveal only more clearly the terrible situation of those on the rocky ledges. The cavern was found to be fairly lofty, and of about the same length as the ship had been. The *Halsewell* had, as a matter of fact, been driven alongside and exactly opposite this great hollow. To get out of this gloomy and dangerous cave was almost impossible. There was indeed a possible way, but it was one to shudder at. A ledge only a few inches wide straggled round the corner of the cavern, and then, on the bare face of the cliff, ran a narrow and dangerous track to the summit, some two hundred feet above. Yet terrible as the aspect was, there were many of the men ready to make the attempt to ascend.

Indeed, they saw no other chance of reaching safety. For some time many of the unfortunate fellows had been murmuring because no answer had come to the guns that had been fired the night before. It was clear to all, however, that the signals had not been heard by the inhabitants of the district. And if any person should come this morning to the edge of the cliff above, what could he see? Certainly not the ship, of which not a spar remained. Neither could he get a sight of the survivors in their cavern. Even if the miserable plight of the sailors was

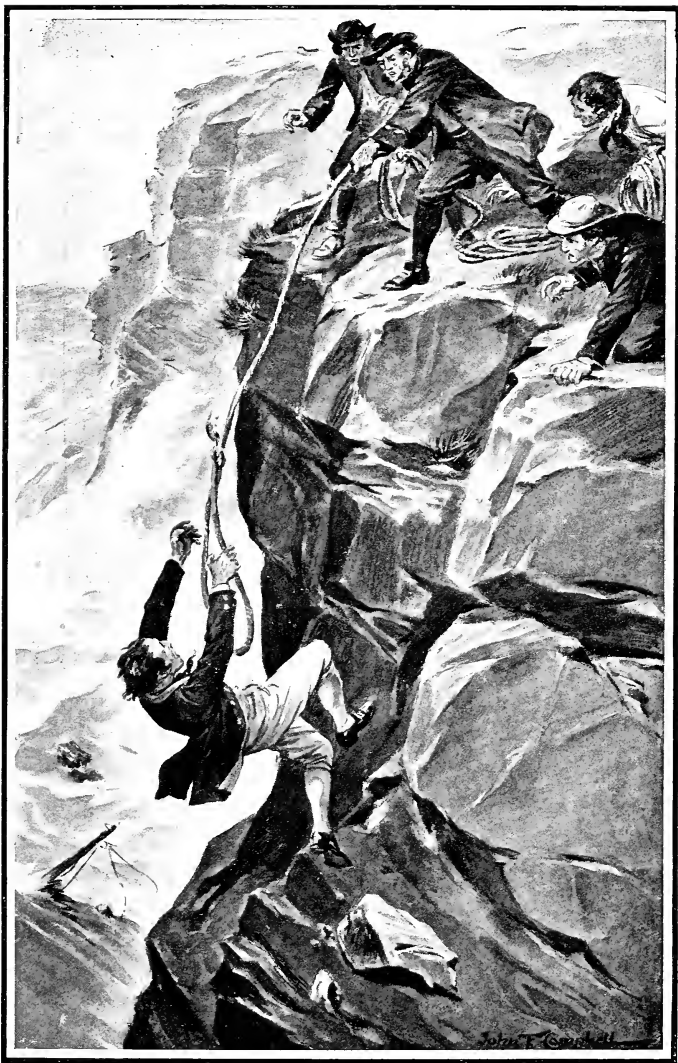
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known to those on shore, what boat could come and fetch them away in such a raging sea and from those fatal rocks?

So some of the men started on their perilous journey along the narrow ledge. Foot by foot they advanced, clinging with benumbed hands to the face of the cliff, shivering in every portion of their bodies, buffeted by the howling winds, yet pushing desperately onward and upward. Now and then came a cry, as some poor wretch, unable longer to retain his hold, fell down the jagged rocks, to drop bruised and torn headlong into the boiling waves far below, his fate a horror to his trembling brethren. It was a pitiful sight.

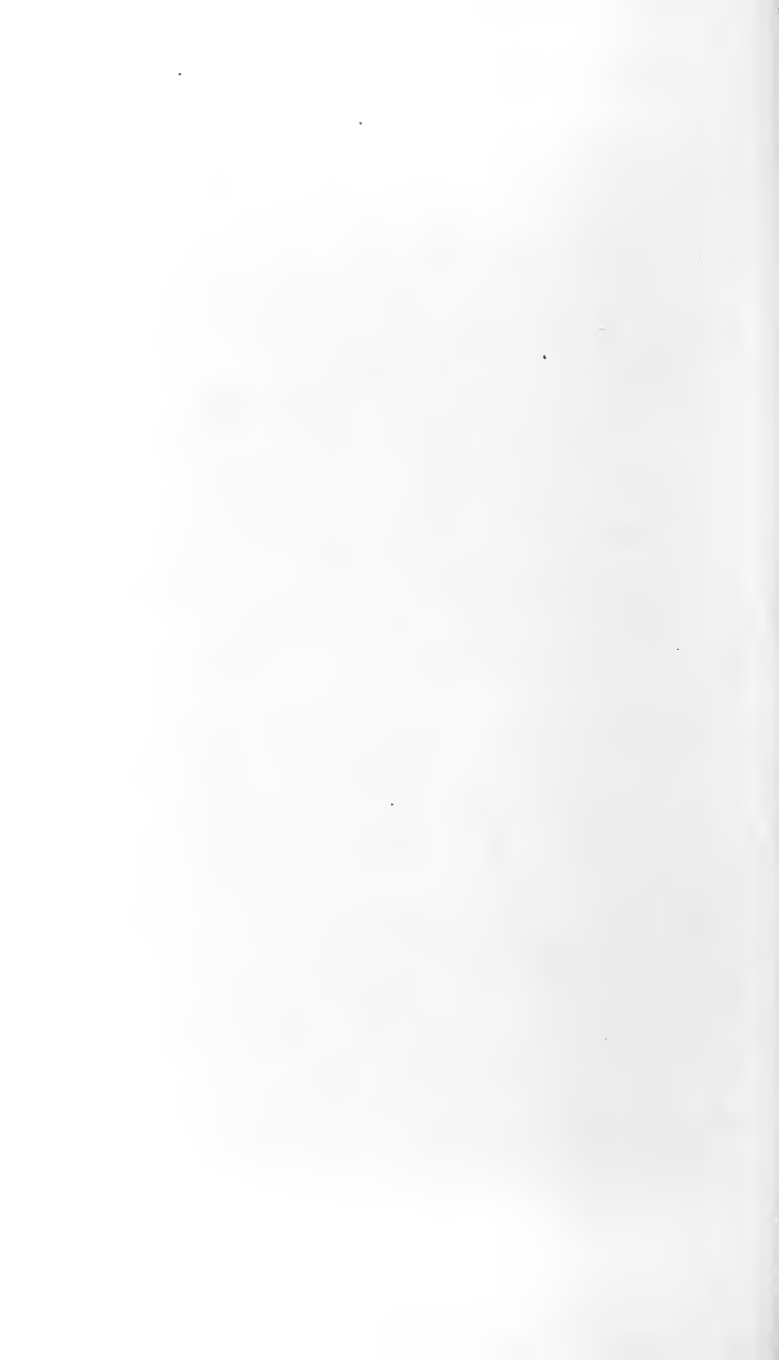
At length two men, stronger and more fortunate than the rest, clambered in the last stage of exhaustion out on the top. They lost no time in running to the nearest house, that of the steward to the famous Purbeck marble quarries. Instantly that gentleman collected his quarrymen and hastened to the edge of the cliff. They arrived at an extraordinarily critical and opportune moment, and by their promptitude saved a most valuable life—that of the heroic second officer, Mr. Meriton. It was on this wise. When the quarrymen reached the edge, they observed one of the climbers nearing the top, and without a second's hesitation they dropped a rope down to him. Strange to relate, as the rope descended, the piece of stone on which the climber placed his foot gave way under him. With a despairing shout the man flung his hands towards the rope as he was falling, and by marvellous good fortune caught it. He managed to hold on till he was drawn up to the top, and then immediately fell fainting to the ground.

The workmen now began their operations systematically



A NARROW ESCAPE

Just as the climber neared the top of the cliff the rock gave way; in despair he flung out his arms and fortunately grasped the rope.



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and skilfully, fixing crowbars firmly in the ground to hold a strong rope. This was then paid out till it dangled in front of the cavern two hundred feet below. Swayed by the wind, the end now and then blew into the cave, to be seized by one or other of the men cowering there. The man would then fasten himself more or less securely to the cord, give the signal, and let himself be drawn up the face of the cliff. Now a fortunate one would arrive there in safety, though bruised and cut by the sharp rocks; now another, ill-secured, or unable to retain his hold, would slip from the rope and fall helplessly into the heaving waves far below. Of these unfortunate ones was Mr. Brimer, the brave officer; his case was a peculiarly sad one, for he had been married only nine days before.

All day the rescue went on, a tedious business, till, when night fell once more, there was but one man left. He, a soldier, spent a second night in that horrible cave, alone, in peril, and torn by anguish of soul, to be rescued, happily, on the following morning.

When all the survivors had assembled at the house of the hospitable steward, they were found to number seventy-four, out of an original company of two hundred and fifty souls. One or two, however, died of exhaustion after their rescue.

In some respects the wreck of the *Halsewell* stands out conspicuous even among the long fearful records of peril and loss at sea, and in nothing more conspicuously than in the singular courage, devotion, and disregard of self displayed by her gallant officers.

CHAPTER X

ROBERTS THE BUCCANEER-PIRATE

Buccaneers, pirates, filibusters—The buccaneers become pirates—Bartholomew Roberts, one of the last of the buccaneer-pirates—Captured by pirates—Chosen captain—Revenge the death of his predecessor—Attack on a fort—A slack time—Attacks forty-two trading ships and a man-of-war—Cowardice of the Portuguese—A rich prize—Escape from a Martinique sloop—The biter bitten—Judge and jury on board the pirate—A shipload of negroes burnt alive—Chased by the cruiser *Swallow*—Companion ship captured—Roberts attacked by the *Swallow*—Death of Roberts—The *Royal Fortune* taken, and pirate crew hanged—End of the gang—A magnificent scoundrel.

BUCCANEER, pirate, filibuster, are words often used indifferently, as if they stood for exactly the same thing. Strictly speaking, however, the terms are not synonymous, as a little acquaintance with history will show. The buccaneers were partly soldiers, partly sailors, who, in the first instance, and for several generations, infested the Spanish Main and raided the Spanish colonies. During the long period when Spain was mistress of the sea, her ships and her lands were considered fair game for her enemies, of whom the English were the chief. Some of our old sea-dogs were true buccaneers; more, they were the most notable of the tribe of whom we have any record. The rugged Hawkins and the mighty Drake were, in fact, buccaneer *kings*, whose prowess was never quite equalled by that of any of the

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long list of their successors and imitators, though this list includes the names of the notorious Morgan, and Blackbeard, and Paul Jones.

Every one knows that these roving desperadoes had their rules, which were rigidly and indeed brutally enforced, and that the head seamen among them were called *lords*. But there came a time when the march of political events, as well as the fiendish cruelty to which some of the buccaneers descended, brought about the extinction of the class, making planters of some of them, and pirates of others. A Royal Proclamation in 1690 offered pardon to all buccaneers who should surrender, and the Peace of Ryswick, eight years later, put an end for a time to the European wars, so that there was no longer an excuse for harrying the Spanish commerce and possessions. So the buccaneer turned pirate, that is, he confined his operations mainly to the *sea* henceforth, and no longer specially singled out *Spaniards* for his prey. The French *flibustier*, in English filibuster, was half buccaneer, half pirate, and kept himself principally to the West Indies.

One of the most remarkable of the later buccaneer-pirates, that is to say, of those who flourished after the opening of the eighteenth century, was Captain Bartholomew Roberts, whose accession to the rank was both sudden and curious. He was a seaman who was captured by a noted sea-rover of the day, Howel Davis. Some six weeks later, Davis was unlucky enough to fall into a trap set for him by the Dutch governor of a fort on the African coast, and was killed. It speaks volumes for the qualities of Roberts the prisoner, when the *lords* of the pirate ship unanimously elected him their commander, though their acquaintance with him ran back only a few weeks. Roberts must have been no

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little taken aback by this dazzling offer, but he did not decline it, and replied to this effect, "Since I have dipped my hands in muddy water"—he had already assisted the pirates as a pressed man—"and must needs be a pirate, I would rather be commander than a mere seaman." And from that day Captain Roberts became a famous pirate leader, a terror to merchants and peaceable mariners, his life crowded with remarkable feats and thrilling adventures, to tell the half of which would require a volume to itself.

Roberts lost no time in showing his mettle. He at once ordered an attack on the Dutch fort, to avenge the death of his predecessor Davis, who had been a great favourite with his men. The fort was on a steep hill, and moreover was protected by a thick wood, which furnished excellent cover for its defenders. Nothing daunted, Roberts landed thirty men, and dashing up the hill drove out the garrison at the point of the sword, spiking the guns. He then re-embarked, and turned his attention to the shipping. He speedily captured those he found anchored under the fort, and then blazed away at the houses on the harbour. Night came on, but the pirate commander proceeded to fire a couple of his captures, and, by the light of the burning ships, coolly threaded his way out of the dangerous shoals and made good his escape. He and his men got off scot-free, mightily elated at the success that had attended their audacious adventure.

A dull time of it the pirates had for the next two months, for not a single prize vessel fell into their hands all that time. It is more than probable that word had been passed among the trading vessels frequenting that coast to keep a sharp look-out for the bold Roberts. Be

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that as it may, the pirates were disgusted, and made their way across the Atlantic to the West Indies. Here their luck seemed to turn. Off the bay of Todos Santos they saw a sight that made their mouths water. There rode at anchor no fewer than forty-two Portuguese merchantmen, all laden for the voyage to Lisbon, and awaiting only the two men-of-war that were to act as convoy. One of these had arrived and was in the midst of the trading fleet, the other was hourly expected. One might have supposed that the pirates would have sheered off at once when confronted with so formidable a fleet. But that was not Roberts's way. He crept in among the merchantmen, in the guise of an innocent trader like themselves, with only a few men visible, the rest being carefully hidden away in the hold. Coming alongside a fine Portuguese vessel, the pirate captain suddenly showed his teeth, boarding the trader with drawn cutlass, and threatening to cut the throat of every man in her if the skipper did not immediately point out the richest prize of the merchant fleet. He further told the Portuguese crew that he and his comrades were gentlemen of fortune, a term to strike terror into the hearts of mariners in those days. The skipper, trembling in every limb, indicated a rich vessel, but hinted that she mounted forty guns and carried a crew of a hundred and fifty men, an armament and a company which Roberts himself could by no means boast.

"Pish!" cried the pirate commander contemptuously. "They are only Portuguese!" and at once he bore down upon the coveted prize. He had imagined the Portuguese would be unaware of the character of his ship, but he quickly perceived his mistake, and saw that the captain was preparing a hot reception for him. Roberts took the

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initiative, and poured in a broadside. Then darting alongside in the confusion caused he boarded with a mighty shout. A fierce encounter took place, and the Portuguese fell fast, while two of the pirate gang were also killed. It was hot work, but it did not last long. The merchantman flew signals of distress and fired guns to attract the attention of the warship. On this Roberts clapped on all sail and endeavoured to get his prize away into the more open sea, but she proved to be a slow sailer, and before long the seventy-gun convoy overhauled him. Here was the pirate commander confronted with a powerful man-of-war carrying hundreds of men. Strange to say, and it must have appeared surprising indeed to Roberts, the big ship declined the contest, the captain being fearful of attacking till his consort should arrive! This, too, in the neighbourhood of a large fleet of Portuguese ships, many of them well armed!

So Roberts sailed away in triumph to the Devil's Islands, in the Surinam River, to dispose of his capture, and to enjoy a carouse after his labours. The prize proved to be a specially valuable one, "laden with sugar, skins, tobacco, and four thousand moidores, besides many gold chains and much jewellery." That one pirate ship, and that a vessel of moderate size only, could single out the richest of a fleet of forty merchantmen, could capture it, though it was well armed, and then carry it off in triumph, in the very presence of a formidable line-of-battleship, seems almost marvellous. But such was the terror inspired by the pirate chiefs in those times.

Narrowly escaping capture by a Martinique sloop, one of the sea-police vessels of those parts, Roberts started for Newfoundland. But presently spying in a harbour at the Guadanillas a company of over twenty sail, he im-

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mediately swept down into the midst of them, boldly flying his black flag, and sounding drum and trumpet. As at Todos Santos, so here, the whole of the crews were terrified at the sight of him. Every man, in fact, fled to the shore, leaving the ships deserted. Roberts had things all his own way, of course, and plundered and burnt to his heart's content, even following the runaways to the shore, where he chased and did further pillaging. One of the finds in the harbour was much to his liking, a Bristol vessel with sixteen guns. With this he at once gave chase to a number of French ships not far away. No fewer than nine of these he destroyed, but preserved one for himself, a fine barque mounting six-and-twenty guns. One of the ships taken was from London and was supposed to be particularly rich. Determined to drag from them all their wealth, the pirate captain tortured the passengers and threatened them with death if they did not bring forth their money. A characteristic scene was witnessed on board this vessel, the *Samuel*. "His men tore up the hatches, and entering the hold with axes and swords, cut and ripped open the bales and boxes. Everything portable they seized; the rest they threw overboard, amidst curses and discharges of guns and pistols. They carried off £9000 worth of goods, the sails, guns, and powder." When the skipper offered the pirates the King's pardon if they would leave his vessel unmolested, they scorned the offer, saying they would accept of no act of grace, and invoking horrible maledictions on the head of his Majesty. So, loaded with money and goods, and carrying with them many a pressed man from the *Samuel*, the undaunted Captain Roberts and his crew sailed away again.

But life had its drawbacks for these lawless and reckless

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rovers. At times they suffered badly from thirst, and even from hunger, for riches quickly and easily got were as quickly disposed of. After a period of carousing and feasting, starvation would often stare them in the face; and occasionally the biter himself got bitten. On one occasion when Roberts himself went ashore in a boat in search of water, his lieutenant, Kennedy, made off with the ship, leaving the commander impotently cursing and gesticulating and threatening on the strand. This Kennedy, be it said, was, after some years of rascality, caught, tried, and duly hanged. This was in 1721. Roberts managed to make his way to the West Indies again, on another of his vessels that came up, and here he had a brush with the authorities, barely escaping capture. The Governor of Barbados had sent a couple of vessels after him, and these, adopting tactics similar to those in use among the pirate brotherhood, went as merchant traders, a tempting bait to Roberts. The buccaneer commander at once attempted, in his usual fashion, to board, but soon found he had caught a Tartar. He was received by a big broadside and with exulting cheers from the throats of the men-of-war crews. Roberts finding himself in a trap, clapped on all sail and fled. An exciting chase ensued, the King's men hanging on the skirts of the pirates, and pouring in a galling fire among them. In his desperation Roberts threw overboard everything that could be moved, and at last even his guns. At length he drew away a little, and finally escaped. From that time he was filled with a bitter hate against all Barbados vessels, just as he had been in the case of Martinique ships. He even designed a new flag, representing himself as stamping on the skulls of a Barbadian and a Martinique man, a foot on each.

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A curious scene deserves to be described: it was on the occasion of the trial of three deserters who had been chased and recaptured. A jury was chosen on the deck of the pirate ship, and a judge appointed. The latter sat and smoked, while the jurymen enjoyed a big bowl of punch. Sentence of death was passed on all the prisoners. Suddenly a juryman, a friend to one of the deserters, started up in a towering passion and swore that his crony should not die. "He is as good a man as the best of you!" roared the objector, with many an oath, "and never turned his back on any man. But if he must die, I will die along with him." So saying, the fellow whipped out a pair of pistols and covered two of the jury. This was a strong argument for the reconsideration of the sentence, so far as the particular deserter in question was concerned, and an acquittal was at once pronounced for him! The two other culprits, having no blustering advocate on their side, were tied to the mast and shot without further ceremony.

It would be impossible to recount the half of the adventures of this determined and unscrupulous pirate chief. Attacking and plundering, now a ship, now some fort or trading establishment on shore, ransacking, firing, wasting, murdering, Captain Roberts and his men flew from sea to sea, and from island to mainland. The company grew ever bolder, more lawless, more licentious, more cruel, till the name of the chief became a horror and a disgust to all honest men. The cup of their iniquities was full to overflowing. But one fiendish deed yet remained for them to do, the most atrocious of all Roberts's long career. He captured a slaver full of wretched negroes who were being carried to the American plantations. As usual, the pirates demanded ransom, but this

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the captain refused to pay. Roberts at once set fire to the vessel, paying no heed to the miserable slaves in the hold. The poor blacks were nearly all chained, and could only await with piteous shrieks the terrible death prepared for them. A few of the negroes managed to escape from the burning hold, and sprang overboard, but only to be devoured by the sharks that had crowded round the vessel, as if well aware of what was likely to happen.

It was high time that somebody took energetic measures against such pests as these men, and a Government cruiser, the *Swallow*, was sent in search of the pirate commander. Roberts got wind of this, and kept out of sight for a time. But after a while the *Swallow* came upon another of the ships, under the command of a brother Welshman. The crew, believing the cruiser to be a Portuguese sugar vessel, were in high glee, saying that they were very short of sugar for their punch. The Welshman bore down upon the supposed trader, when suddenly the warship threw up her ports and fired a broadside, bringing down the black flag. Not daunted the fellows hoisted their colours again, drew their cutlasses, and for two hours fought like furies. At last the pirate's maintop came down with a crash, and the vessel struck. She had ten men killed and twice that number wounded, while the cruiser, astonishing to relate, had lost not a man.

As the *Swallow's* boat was on its way to take possession of the capture, an explosion was heard, and it was found that some of the desperadoes had been trying to blow up their ship. The quantity of powder used, however, had been too little for the purpose. The pirate captain, the Welshman, was found with his leg shot off, but he refused all offers to attend to his wounds. The conversation that

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followed between the man-of-war officer in charge of the prize and a fellow he found on board the pirate was short and grim.

"I presume you are the boatswain of this ship?" said the officer.

"Then you presume wrong," answered the other, "for I am boatswain of the *Royal Fortune*—Captain Roberts."

"Then, Mr. Boatswain, you will be hanged."

"That is as your Honour pleases," calmly replied the pirate, walking away.

"Are all Roberts's crew as likely men as you?" inquired the officer of the same man later on, admiring the rascal's fine physique.

"There ~~is~~ a hundred and twenty of them, as clever fellows as ever trod shoe leather," the boatswain made answer. "And that's the naked truth," he added with a roar of laughter, showing his own bare feet.

Some of the pirates in their rage refused all attention from the surgeon, and one fellow even tore away the bandages that had been put on him against his will. In his delirium this man raved about the "brave Roberts," and next day died through the mortification that had set in.

The day following the capture of the subordinate ship, Roberts himself came up on board his *Royal Fortune*, bringing with him a rich prize. At first he took the Government cruiser to be a merchantman, but speedily finding how grievously mistaken he was, he prepared for a fight, the last time, as it afterwards proved, he was ever to clear his decks for action. "He appeared on deck dressed in crimson and damask," says a lively account of the scene, "with a red feather in his cocked hat, a gold chain and diamond cross round his neck, a sword in his hand,

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and two pairs of pistols hanging pirate-fashion from a silk sling over his shoulders. His orders were given in a loud voice with unhesitating boldness." Such fine birds were some of the buccaneer chieftains.

All this finery and bravado, which had so often served the pirate well, were now of no avail. Roberts attempted to out-manceuvre the *Swallow*, but somehow his steering was not of his usual skilful order, and the warship overhauled him. Just then the commander was struck by a grape-shot, which penetrated his throat. The notorious pirate leader, long the terror of the mercantile world, sat him quietly down on some gun-tackle close by, and breathed his last. The helmsman not far away ran up, and called upon his captain to stand up and fight it out like a man. He had not observed the tiny wound in the throat, and fancied that his chief, for once in his life, was showing the white feather. The pirate steersman wept bitterly when he found out his mistake, and others of the crew coming up, they picked up their dead commander and flung him overboard, with all his finery and his weapons, just as Roberts had always desired should be done if death overtook him in action.

With the loss of their incomparable leader the pirates also lost heart, and they were compelled to surrender. A party of them, after their usual fashion, tried to blow up the vessel, but were stopped by their companions. The famous—or infamous—*Royal Fortune*, when taken, was found to have one hundred and fifty-seven men, forty guns, and more than two thousand pounds' worth of gold dust on board.

Terrible scenes took place among the pirate prisoners, most of whom were perfectly reckless, and only laughed at their impending fate. The majority of them were hanged,

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the greater part hardened and graceless to the last. With this victory for the authorities, the notorious Roberts gang was broken up, though this pirate chief was not quite the last of his tribe. Roberts was a thorough scoundrel, yet a magnificent scoundrel, and had he turned his talents as a seaman and a fighter into a lawful channel, England might now be ranking Captain Roberts among its most splendid admirals.

CHAPTER XI

TWO THOUSAND MILES IN A PAPER CANOE.

North American bays and estuaries—Mr. Bishop starts from Quebec in a canoe—How a paper boat is made—Weight fifty-eight pounds only—In Delaware Bay—Big rollers—Swamped, and upside down—Blindly swimming—A hard struggle—Boat follows—A cool change of clothes—Rough seas off the Virginian coast—A desolate and cheerless shore—Musk-rats and oyster-coons—The storm in Pamlico Sound—The yacht *Julia*—A wreck-strewn coast—Chased by porpoises—An alligator at close quarters—The Gulf of Mexico.

AMONG sea adventures worth reading of, many have taken place, not in the midst of great seas or oceans, but quite close to the shore; often, indeed, in some gulf or other coast opening, which, if not exactly the “high seas,” may truly be considered a portion of them. There is much in a name, and no doubt there are persons who suppose the Bay of Bengal or the Gulf of Mexico to be small things compared with the Irish Sea and the German Ocean! And there are not a few of even better-educated folk who do not for a moment realise the size of some of the “inlets” of the world, those, for instance, on the coast of North America, the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Delaware and Chesapeake bays, and so on.

These latter estuaries are mentioned advisedly, for the present chapter is to tell somewhat of a remarkable voyage made between twenty and thirty years ago by an American

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gentleman, Mr. Bishop, a singularly plucky and adventurous fellow who worked his way along the United States coast and waterways for a distance of over two thousand miles in a paper canoe! When a mere lad of seventeen, he had distinguished himself by walking across the continent of South America, a distance of more than a thousand miles, including the crossing of the stupendous Andes range, and then writing a valuable book on his travels. Now, in 1874, he started to work his way in a canoe, from Quebec to the Gulf of Mexico.

For the first four hundred miles he rowed in a timber-built canoe, and had with him a companion assistant. But when he reached Troy—he had travelled thither by inland waterways—Mr. Bishop came across some remarkable paper boats built by Messrs. Waters there. He was soon satisfied of the excellence of these singular boats and discarded his old canoe. Dismissing his helper, he started on his journey again, alone, and in one of these frail skiffs. From that time, till he reached the coast of Florida, in the Mexican Gulf, this man of “snap,” as he was called in some of the Southern States, “paddled his own canoe,” as he puts it, and such a canoe! To the very end of his voyage the people he met with marvelled—nay, were alarmed—that a man could set himself to traverse a couple of thousand miles of river, estuary, land-locked bay, marsh, roadstead, and open sea in a paper boat.

Startling as may be the notion of using paper for the construction of such a thing as a boat, the ingenious American inventors had yet much to say for the material. Paper, or rather strong cardboard, will stand an amount of hammering and bending and general rough usage that would inevitably split and destroy wood of the same thickness, or even of the same weight. It is true

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that wood will, as a rule, float for any length of time, while paper will become saturated and sink ; but if the latter be soaked in marine glue, it will be "equally as impervious to water as wood, and as buoyant, if of the same weight." Paper can be bent or moulded to any shape whatever, while wood cannot, and it "neither swells, nor shrinks, nor cracks, hence it does not leak, is always ready for use, always serviceable." Finally, damage to a paper boat can easily be repaired by using strong paper covered with a coating of shellac, which can be put on with a hot iron.

An exceedingly interesting account of the method of constructing these paper boats is given by Mr. Bishop, but it is too long to quote in full. The essential points, however, are these. First, an exact model of the intended craft is made in light wood, the keel and every part finished off as perfectly as in the ordinary boat. The model is then covered with a sheet of paper put on damp, laid smoothly, and fastened down till the sheet is dry. A second sheet is put on this, and cemented to it, and so on till the required thickness has been obtained. The whole is then taken to the drying-room, when, as the drying proceeds, it is found that all wrinkles disappear, and, when the mould is removed, an exact facsimile in paper is obtained, "exceedingly stiff, perfectly symmetrical, and seamless." The boat is now subjected to the waterproof process, and a light inner wooden frame is added by the carpenter, this being necessary when the outer shell is of such a material as paper. The canoe is then varnished and finished in the usual way. In short, it is an ordinary boat with a paper skin instead of the regular wooden sheathing, and its strength is said to be remarkable.

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Of course there were plenty of croakers when Mr. Bishop began his long and adventurous voyage in this cockle-shell, which weighed no more than fifty-eight pounds when ready to receive her equipment and cargo. Notwithstanding all the shakings of the head and the predictions of failure and disaster, this American imitator of the European Macgregor, of *Rob Roy* fame—"the father of modern canoe travelling"—set forth in his paper skiff, the *Maria Theresa*. She measured fourteen feet in length and twenty-eight inches in beam. Her depth was, at the bow twenty-three inches, amidships fourteen, and at the stern twenty inches. The thickness of her skin was but one-eighth of an inch. Mr. Bishop whimsically remarks that his boat, with himself and all his belongings in her, with provisions for a long voyage, and with all her own fittings, mast, and what not, weighed a good deal less than the three trunks a lady would take with her for a two or three weeks' visit to the seaside.

Without following this hardy voyager through all the many miles of his cruise, we may join him here and there, and give some of the most exciting and interesting of his experiences. The earlier part of his adventurous voyage was marked by a mishap which bid fair to end disastrously, if not to himself, at any rate so far as a successful accomplishment of his cruise was concerned. He had just grounded on an oyster bed near the mouth of the great Delaware Bay. As the canoe rocked for several minutes in the breakers, he was in great trepidation lest the rough, hard shells might have done serious damage. To his surprise and delight, he found things much better than he had expected. There were only a few scrapings and scratchings on the skin of the boat, and these he soon smoothed

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over and repaired by the help of shellac and a hot iron.

A strong wind and a rough sea presently made his work hard and not without risk, and for many miles he pulled wearily along, ever watchful lest a sudden squall or an awkward wave should swamp him. He had kept pretty close inshore. The mouth of the bay is not far short of twenty miles across, and the estuary is a good deal wider than that a few miles higher up. A person in the middle of it on that tempestuous day could have seen the land on neither side, while the heaving, tossing waves would have still more persuaded him into the belief that he was in mid-ocean. Wave after wave tossed the paper canoe towards the shore, and it was with the utmost difficulty the owner could keep her off the fishermen's stakes that lined it.

At last there rolled up fair and square and without a crest a mighty wave, and bore down upon the voyager. For but a moment he caught sight of this huge mountain of water advancing, and he attempted to flee from it. In vain; the next instant the wave fell upon him and his shell, engulfing them and sweeping the boat from stern to stem. Pouring through the opening between his body and the canvas cover, the sea filled the canoe, and she became waterlogged. Practically she was swamped, for nothing appeared above water but the highest points of the stem and the stern, and these only occasionally. It needed but another wave to complete the catastrophe. It came. Careering along as high as the rower's head and shoulders, in a second it "rolled both canoe and canoeist upside down." Here was a pretty pass for him! He was half imprisoned in his raft, the canvas cover drawn about his waist! If he could not speedily free himself he was a

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dead man. Luckily he contrived to kick himself clear of the deck-cover, and popped up from under his boat to the surface. But how about righting the craft? Mr. Bishop amusingly tells us that he had once read the following directions from a book on canoeing: "When you capsize, first right the canoe, and get astride it over one end, keeping your legs in the water; when you have crawled to the well or cock-pit, bale out the boat with your hat." Admirable instructions; but, alas! Mr. Bishop's canoe could not be righted. The cargo had settled on the canvas deck, as the boat floated bottom upwards, and the weight of such a ballast was too much for him. Moreover, her sides were so smooth and slippery that he could not get a hold. To crown all, his hat was gone, and no baling would have been possible, even if he could have righted the skiff. So he struck out for the shore, a few hundred yards away.

The distance was nothing in itself, but the canoeist had a very severe struggle. The water was brown with the quantity of suspended sand in it, and the sand got into his eyes and scratched his face as the waves dashed furiously about him. He was bruised and blinded, and every moment he was flung under the billows, so that it was with difficulty he could get even a breath of air. He could hear the thundering roar of the breakers ahead, but could see nothing, his eyes being blocked up with the sand; he was swimming blindly, in fact. At such a time, to use his own words, you "strike out, fight as you never fought before, swallowing as little water as possible, and never relaxing an energy or yielding a hope." Manfully struggling, at length he felt ground with his feet, and stood upright, to be knocked down the next instant by a long roller. Up he sprang again, and again was laid

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prostrate, till, half swimming, half crawling, he pulled himself up out of the seething waves, where he stood for a little space watching the water drain in streams off his garments, and wondering where he should find a shelter on that lonely shore.

He did not stand long, the keen winter blast instantly chilled him to the bone; soon he must freeze to death if he could get no shelter or dry garments. But the canoe—should he abandon the gallant little craft? Even while he was hastily considering the question he observed with joy the canoe dancing on the breakers a few yards away. He was as wet and cold as he could be, so he plunged in again, and, after a hard tussle, dragged the *Maria Theresa* to shore. A hasty search showed that the flannel suit he had in a waterproof bag was quite dry, and about the only thing that was. It was imperative that the change of garments should be made at once. But how? The bitter Atlantic blasts blew through him, so to speak; he was benumbed; his arms and legs had no feeling in them. At this moment he remembered some very fine brandy a friend had given him at the start, with the remark, "It may save your life." Mr. Bishop was no dram drinker, but the pull he took at the spirits at once sent a glow through his body, and he was then able to do what he had found impossible before, to doff his sea-soaked apparel and don the dry. Thus revived he soon had a rousing fire of driftwood blazing—he had a waterproof case of matches in his pocket—whereat he dried his dripping garments. He had lately passed Murderkill Creek and was now camping on Slaughter Bay, strange names to a man who had just narrowly escaped death, as our plucky paper-canoeist had!

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Another mishap, though not so serious as the former, befell him later on. It was off the coast of Virginia, at Watchapreague Inlet. The tide was running with all the force of a rapid, and the puffs of wind tossed the billows about in the wildest fashion. "Waves washed over my canoe, but the gallant little craft after each rebuff rose like a bird to the surface of the water, answering the slightest touch of my oar better than the best-trained steed. After entering the south-side swash the wind struck me on the back, and seas came tumbling over and around the boat, fairly forcing me on to the beach. As we flew along the tumultuous waters made my head swim; so, to prevent mental confusion, I kept my eyes only upon the oars, which, strange to say, never betrayed me into a false stroke."

Suddenly a heavier blast than any that had yet come caught the canoe, and threw it against the sandy beach, which the voyager had not thought to be so near. The craft struck the sand with a violent jerk, and the canoeist leapt out as if shot, seizing his little skiff and pulling it away from the attack of the breakers. It is not to be wondered at when he tells us that he looked for a cosy hiding-place behind some pigmy sand dunes, and there watched the heaving and rolling seas till towards evening. He then lifted the canoe back into her own element, and tried his luck once more. For a few miles he paddled along the shore, till, when the darkening came—it was the last day in November—he found himself close to a marshy island, a dreary spot in a dreary and lonely region. Not a habitation or sign of man's occupation was to be seen anywhere, and the traveller had to make the best of a bad case. He stepped out, to sink up to his knees in mud, and carried his boat out of reach of the waves.

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There was not a scrap of firewood to be found, and the place was marshy and cold; so he squeezed himself into the hollow of his frail craft for the night, a rubber blanket covering the cockpit. Various animals came during the night to inspect the visitor's queer abode—mallards, musk-rats, and the oyster-eating coon, which no doubt sniffed his provisions. He had to rap sharply on the inside of his boat now and then to scare away the sharp-toothed little animals, which otherwise would soon have gnawed through his shell. He was cold and cramped; to turn in bed he had to unbutton his deck-cover, and go through first-class acrobatic performances. "For the first time in my life," he says, "I found it necessary to get *out* of bed in order to turn over in it." In the morning, when his last turn-out came, he was stiff and shivering, and, to make his toilet, he had to stand in wet shoes in icy water. He needed no reminder that the day was the first of December.

In the neighbourhood of the dreaded Cape Hatteras the canoeist experienced one of the most frightful tempests he had ever seen, even in the tropics. Fortunately he had just entered the extensive Pamlico Sound, a vast inland sea extending some eighty miles in length and thirty in width, and separated from the open Atlantic only by a long and very narrow strip of land, which is pierced here and there by little passages. As he was entering the Sound he received a foretaste of what

Cape Hatteras had in store
For those who pass her howling door.

The wind had increased to a tempest, and he was obliged to accept the invitation of a fisherman to board his boat. They attempted to tow the canoe, but the waves filled it

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with water, so that they were compelled to take it on board.

In the same Sound, seeking the paper canoe, was a yacht, *Julia*, whose owner was bent upon capturing Mr. Bishop, that he might carry him off and hospitably entertain him to his Christmas dinner. The canoe was safely tucked away in a sheltered spot on the beach, and the owner comfortably housed in the neighbourhood, while the *Julia* in its search encountered all the fury of the storm. Thousands of acres were soon covered by the sea; the vivid lightning every few minutes lit up the intense darkness of the night; the outer waves pounded at the frail barrier between them and the inner sound till Mr. Bishop expected the whole to be washed away. But it was a grand sight and a most beautiful one. "The phosphorescent sea, covered with its tens of millions of animalculæ, each one a miniature lighthouse, changed in colour from inky blackness to silver sheen." As for the tempest, it raged more madly than ever. "It howled, bellowed, and screeched like a legion of demons." It was a wild night on a specially and notoriously dangerous coast. A walk along the shore had already shown our voyager the remains of scores, if not hundreds, of wrecks embedded in the sand and mud. Mr. Bishop calculated that since the time of Sir Walter Raleigh, the total wrecks on that coast, if placed end to end, would have made one continuous line of vessels for many miles.

All that night the yacht *Julia* was in extreme peril. Her anchors were all out, and these were assisted by all the iron ballast that could be fastened to the cables. No one could put his head out of the hatches, for wave upon wave swept clean over the vessel. The water was forced in streams through the cabin windows, which, with the

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rolling of the ship, were again and again submerged. At length the anchors began to drag, and soon the yacht was flung with a thud on a shoal. The kindly owner and his companions were in imminent danger of going to the bottom. But at last the change of tide came, and the *Julia* was swung off the shoal into deep water, where luckily she was able to ride out the storm.

The canoeist had presently to cross the mouth of the Hatteras Inlet, a place of whose dangers he had heard much. This tide-way was, in truth, a place to be dreaded. To his delight, the rower found the water not so rough on first inspection as he had feared. But he did not know the possibilities of the spot. He made the necessary preparations, examined the craft carefully, and pulled the canvas deck-cover closely round his waist. There was no help near should a mishap occur. As he pulled steadily into the dreaded waters, Mr. Bishop thought of the sharks, which often snapped at the oars of the Hatteras fishermen, and he reflected grimly on the special attractiveness of his own white shining oar blades! A peculiar creeping sensation came over him, he declares.

Soon he was at the meeting of two currents, and there the wind also swooped down upon him with full force. He rowed with all his might, having learnt that the greater speed helped to keep his frail craft afloat better. The canoe "bounced from one irregular wave to another, with a climbing action," which was terrifying enough, but which relieved his anxiety as to the buoyancy of his boat. Dreading now lest he might get too close inshore and be swamped and battered among the breakers, he glanced quickly over his shoulder, and was alarmed to see the "white horses" quite near. He had a hard tug of it to get his canoe into deeper water, but managed it.

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A curious experience now was his. As his shell of a boat tossed about madly on the seething waves, crowds of great unwieldy creatures suddenly sprang out of the water several feet into the air, and then dropped into the deep again. They darted under his craft, lashed the water with their tails, and gambolled about in a manner that may have been sportive to them, but which was decidedly disconcerting to the canoeist. For a moment he was so taken aback, indeed, that he ceased rowing, to find himself instantly drifting dangerously in the trough of the seas. Not till now did he see that the frisky creatures were porpoises. For all that they were not welcome in the vicinity of a paper skiff, and Mr. Bishop pulled hard for shallower water and the shore.

But to no purpose. The brutes would not leave him; the quicker he rowed, the more numerous the animals actually seemed to become around him. The porpoises were from five to seven feet long, and must have weighed from two to four hundredweight each. The voyager was most afraid of "the strong, shooting movements of their tails in the sudden dives under my canoe, for one sportive touch of such a *caudality* would have rolled me over, and furnished material for a tale the very anticipation of which was unpleasant." The brutes fairly chased him into three feet of water, and then, with noisy blowings and snortings, had perforce to leave him.

Of alligators the canoeist saw hundreds in the course of his voyagings, but he generally contrived to make the view a distant one. Occasionally, however, the mutual inspection was a bit too close to be pleasant, as happened once when he had got farther south, in one of the mud creeks of Georgia. He was seated in his canoe, looking for a landing-place, when he became aware of a crashing

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noise among the dry reeds and rushes that lined the shore. He could see the tops of the vegetation moving, but could detect no animal. His curiosity was soon more than satisfied, and at the sight that appeared he pulled off in remarkably vigorous style. "There emerged slowly from the covert an alligator nearly as large as my canoe. The brute's head was as long as a barrel; his rough coat of mail was besmeared with mud, and his dull eyes were fixed steadily upon me." For a moment the canoeist was as a man dazed, and actually remained on the spot till the huge reptile took the water. Then Mr. Bishop recovered his wits and his activity. He had a further experience of these reptiles in the swamps of Georgia. As he was paddling along he heard a peculiar sound frequently repeated, as though some one were beating the water with a flat board, and always ahead of him. By rapid paddling he was enabled to overtake the cause of the sound, and found that it was produced by innumerable alligators, which made for the water on his approach, and as they dived struck the surface violently with their tails. These, however, were very much smaller than the monster he had encountered some time before, being only about four feet long, and mere babies. But one night he was indeed alarmed by loud bellowing close to the spot where he was encamped, which was answered from the other side of the river. This proved to be two huge male alligators challenging each other to combat; but, although their proximity was anything but pleasant, Mr. Bishop passed the night without being molested.

Water moccasins are the terror of the negroes in these parts, as they are so venomous that even their own species fly from their neighbourhood. As Mr. Bishop was paddling along he saw thousands of these reptiles, many of which

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dropped into the water from the overhanging branches of trees on his approach.

Off South Carolina his tiny bark for the first time floated on the ocean, and here he had an anxious time, for after coasting the beach of the muddy lowlands he found his way to Bull's Bay. There was a heavy surf breaking on the shore, which he was obliged to hug closely because his old enemies the porpoises were fishing in large shoals. To avoid the dangerous oyster reefs on the one hand and the lively monsters on the other was as much as Mr. Bishop could do. Again and again he was chased towards the sharp shells. It was growing dark, and he was off a dangerous shore, and things looked anything but bright for the canoeist, when he suddenly espied the tall masts of a schooner sheltered in a creek, for which he made with all his strength.

Travelling slowly on, now by the shore of the open sea, now by some inland water, fresh or salt, but usually the latter, and arranging an occasional portage, the voyager found himself at last at the end of his long and marvellous cruise, the vast Gulf of Mexico sending its waters lapping gently against the frail skin of his little shell. "The *Maria Theresa* danced in the shimmering waters of the great Southern Sea, and my heart was light, for my voyage was over."

From *Voyage of the Paper Canoe*, by N. H. Bishop. Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1878. By obliging permission from the publisher.

CHAPTER XII

A "LEVANTER"

An American writer stranded at Smyrna—Takes passage for Malta in the *Metamora*—A big gale blows up—Under bare poles—The cabin a-wash—"On deck for your life!"—A jagged precipice in front—Saved!—Holding on while asleep—Two days and nights in the dangerous Archipelago—Nearing Malta—A great difficulty in landing the passenger—Unselfish conduct of the crew—Exhausted men haul out the heavy long-boat—Landed on the quarantine steps of Malta—Gallant and kindly skipper and crew.

ALL storms at sea do not, happily, result in dire disaster or loss of life. Often a vessel will ride through a tempest of the most violent kind, will be buffeted and battered, and even badly damaged, yet will emerge still seaworthy, and with not a life lost in the dangers and confusion of the time. A good example of this is afforded by the experiences of an American ship, in which Mr. Willis, a literary gentleman, sailed in the early years of the nineteenth century.

Mr. Willis had for some time been cruising as a guest on an American frigate, but when she had at length to go into winter quarters, at Mahon, he had to leave her. It was in the days of the Greek revolt from the Turkish domination and tyranny. The traveller found himself stranded at Smyrna, seeking a passage to Malta by the first likely vessel leaving the port. Nothing very suitable seemed to show itself, although there were in the harbour

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ships from every land the sun shone on, till one day, when Mr. Willis was sitting in the office of a merchant friend at Smyrna. Presently in walked a typical Yankee skipper, dressed in his best shore garments, however, for the visit. He turned out to be the master of the American brig *Metamora*, and it appeared that he was sailing for New York with the next morning land-breeze. The merchant introduced skipper and would-be passenger to each other, the former gripping the other's hand with such heartiness that for the moment Mr. Willis thought every bone in the member had been crushed.

The captain could not boast of much accommodation, he said frankly. There was a starboard berth encumbered with the new sprit-sail, sundry boxes of figs, and a few of the mate's belongings, but some of the things could be shifted. So the bargain was struck, and the passenger went on board at midnight, to sleep soundly. When he awoke next morning he knew by the sound of the waves swishing against the sides of the vessel that the *Metamora* was out in the Gulf. Mounting to the deck, he could see the turrets of the city left far behind. The captain had donned his oilskins and tarpaulin hat, and was regarding through the glass a point of land ahead, near which were just visible the topsails of two frigates, which had put out of harbour before them. The brig ploughed her way steadily through the waves, but the United States warships more than kept the lead they had, and at length disappeared. A pleasant day enough passed, captain and passenger sitting on deck cracking nuts and spinning yarns.

"We shall have a snorter out of the nor'-east," the skipper remarked, as the sun set over Ephesus, and he scanned the horizon a trifle anxiously. He went on to say that the passage through the Archipelago was a bad

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one at the best, as a rule, and terrible when there came a "Levanter." He had already seized the tiller himself, and sent the helmsmen forward.

Keeping the tiller hard a-port, the skipper appeared, to the surprise of his passenger, to be heading straight for an ugly rock at the end of the cape which forms the termination of the northern coast of the Gulf of Smyrna. Things looked ominous, but the captain kept on, till the point was only "a biscuit-toss" away. Then in a twinkling the tiller was thrown over, and the vessel sheered off. Before long the anchor was dropped under the shelter of the towering granite cliffs, in the tiniest of bays, and there the night was spent in safety. Next morning the captain took his friend ashore for a spell, and a pleasant time was spent. When the sun unexpectedly showed itself again, however, a hasty return was made to the *Metamora*, and anchor was weighed. Soon the brig was surging through a tossing sea, the deck swept every minute or two under the increasing gale. None of the other vessels they had seen had ventured out of the sheltered anchorage. The wind freshening more and more drove the ship at a spanking rate through the heaving seas. The skipper looked anxious, but carefully managed his barque, scudding rapidly along under a single sail. Mr. Willis was joyful, believing that he would see Malta far sooner than he had expected to do, if that rate of speed were kept up.

At all times the Archipelago is a dangerous sea to navigate, if stormy weather prevails, and now the brig was entering it at the worst time possible, nightfall, and with an ugly gale and a threatening sky upon her. Nevertheless the *Metamora* sped on, leaving behind a French man-of-war, the *Superbe*, of eighty guns, which

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a few hours afterwards became a total wreck, unfortunately striking on one of the rocky islands.

Bed-time came, but Mr. Willis could not for a long time tear himself from the deck. The vessel was now running under bare poles and threading her way among innumerable little islets. The risk was very great, and when the passenger went below and turned in for the night, it was with the feeling that if they all escaped destruction it would be by a miracle. The skipper was going to spend the night on deck, and he proceeded to lash everything that might otherwise be swept overboard, for a tremendous sea was now running. Everybody got for himself biscuit and some grog, the only refreshment they were likely to get for a considerable time, the cook being quite past work in this wild tossing turmoil of waters. Before turning in, the passenger got a glimpse of the captain's face, and it showed him—what, however, he already knew—"that though resolute and unmoved, he knew himself to be entering on the most imminent hazard of his life."

Mr. Willis had to hang on to his berth hard, in order to keep himself from being pitched out headlong. Above his head he could hear the seas descend in tons on the deck, and could feel the ship making her dives under the mountainous waves at every pitch. He had prepared for swimming by throwing off everything likely to hinder his efforts. In his cabin things were too lively to be pleasant. His dressing-case and its scattered contents, clothing, and various etceteras, were tossed hither and thither in the water that covered the floor; and every sea that poured down the companion-ladder added to the wash in the apartment. The passenger could do nothing but watch, by the dim light of the hanging lantern, his coat

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and waistcoat going through curious antics in the sea-water bath on the floor of the cabin. He had a miniature tempest of his own, in fact, with tiny waves heaving and rolling and tossing and splashing in faint but almost comic imitation of the mightier turmoil outside.

Worse and worse grew the storm. Mr. Willis could hear the hoarse shout of the captain giving the order to help in lashing the helm. The crash of the water on deck as it fell in vast volumes was now awful. The passenger's portmanteau had been well tied, but suddenly it broke loose, and shot from side to side of the cabin in a most violent fashion. Worse than that, there were some unoccupied berths in the place, and these were filled with fig-boxes, which now began to leap wildly about. Says the traveller, "If I was not to be drowned like a dog in a locked cabin, I feared, at least, I should have my legs broken by the leap of a fig-box into my berth. My situation was wholly uncomfortable, yet half-ludicrous."

"Where are we?" asked the passenger, when, about midnight, the skipper descended for a glass of grog. The man was looking pale and exhausted.

"God only knows!" was the reply. "I expect her to strike every minute."

Then he went out, locked the cabin door again, and with difficulty got himself on deck once more, leaving Mr. Willis a prisoner to think his own thoughts.

An hour passed away. The winds were howling and shrieking in the rigging like an army of fiends. The vessel heaved more violently than ever, and before long the occupant of the cabin, hearing the rush of feet above, conjectured that the men were cutting the lashings of the tiller. Presently Mr. Willis fancied the pitch of the

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ship was becoming shorter, and at once he guessed they were nearing some reef. He sat up and prepared to spring out of his berth. At that instant the cabin door was flung open, and a huge wave poured down the ladder and into the room.

"On deck for your life!" a voice cried hoarsely. It was the skipper.

The passenger was only half-dressed, both head and feet bare, but he did not hesitate an instant. Making for the companion steps, he dashed up through the deluges of salt water that poured upon him in stunning, blinding volume. The brig was tossing so fearfully that, in spite of the water, he had to stand and cling to a rope when the rushes came. Thus blinded, buffeted, bewildered, the passenger at last stood on deck, just as the captain shouted, "Hard down!" in a voice never to be forgotten. The crisis was close at hand, though Mr. Willis did not at that moment know exactly what it was. He was instantly to learn.

"As the rudder creaked with the strain," he says, "the brig fell slightly off, and, rising with a tremendous surge, I saw dimly relieved against the sky the edge of a ragged precipice, and the next moment, as if shot from a catapult, we were flung back into the trough of the sea by the retreating wave, and surged heavily beyond the rock." It was an awful experience—the maddened sea, the frowning precipice just in front, the vessel driven with the speed of an arrow straight upon it! Not a soul on board could have lived a minute had the expected crash come.

But, most providentially, the worst was past. The *Metamora* had given the rock the slip, as one might say; she was now tearing away from the fatal spot. "The

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noise of the waters, and the rapid commands of the captain, now drowned the hiss of the wind, and in a few minutes we were plunging once more through the uncertain darkness, the long and regular heavings of the sea alone assuring us that we were driving from the shore." The imminent and fearful danger threatening the American barque was over.

The passenger, though intensely relieved in mind, as he must have been, was yet in anything but a comfortable predicament. He was drenched to the skin, and shivering in the bitter wind. The creaking masts seemed as if they would come down and crush everybody beneath them. If he went back to his cabin, the place was inundated worse than ever. But there was nothing better to do, and so he turned in once more, wet, aching, and miserable, to wait till daylight. When at length the morning did come, the storm was still furious as ever. The skipper went to tell his passenger—what, however, Mr. Willis had already suspected—that the precipice on which they had so nearly run headlong was the southern point of the island of Negropont. It was a veritable miracle that had saved them. The back wave had taken the brig off for an instant, and when the return roller had come she had risen, and had shot just beyond the point. Well may the master have "looked beaten out," his eyes "protruding and strained," his face to "have emaciated in the night." The gallant fellow was quite done up, and threw himself upon a berth for half an hour. When the skipper again hurried on deck Mr. Willis followed him, having had more than enough of his own berth that night.

The scene that met his gaze was one of desolation. Bulwarks and jolly-boat had alike been swept away, and the long-boat was the only movable thing left on deck.

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The men were weary, haggard in face, and some were actually dozing, holding on mechanically but firmly. Every moment the seas washed over them, for the storm was still at its height. With difficulty the skipper and his mate kept the brig's head to the waves, looking vigilantly and anxiously for any land ahead. Not a word was spoken; all were quite past that.

A miserable day passed in this way, the storm ever driving and buffeting, the captain and his crew sticking to their posts hour after hour, with the exception of an occasional absence for a few minutes, when each man in turn would run below, to swallow a little grog and munch a bit of biscuit, which was done in silence, and then return doggedly to his duty. It was a fine display of determined endurance. As for food, there was none to be had, save the spirits and the ship biscuit. Mr. Willis was chilled, soaked, hungry, thoroughly done up, and, when darkness fell again, was fain to throw himself, even in that wretched condition, upon his bed. There, clinging with both hands to prevent himself from being flung out, he fell asleep, and, like the men above, held on fast even while he slept. His brief spells of rest and unconsciousness were a real blessing to him, for they enabled him to forget for the time his miseries and the dangers of his situation.

Another day wore away, then another night—how, the traveller hardly knew. Never once all this time did the storm abate. The *Metamora* flew at great speed before the wind, happily avoiding the thousand dangers that beset her course. When the morning of the third day dawned the skipper reckoned that the vessel had made fully four hundred miles in the hurricane. "The crew were exhausted with watching, the brig laboured

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more and more heavily, and the storm seemed eternal."

But the biggest gale that ever blows wears itself out at last, and so did this in the Grecian Archipelago. About midday the sun showed itself a little, through the parted clouds, and the wind began to lessen somewhat in force. The sea was still raging, but now the cook managed to pull himself together, and made a fire. A meal of boiled rice was all he could set before the famished men, but no banquet ever tasted half so good, and a mighty change of cheer came for passenger and sailors. If the sea was very rough, it was at least an open sea; the dangerous rock-encumbered Archipelago had been left behind; Malta was ahead and at no great distance. "The pitching and racking motion, and the occasional shipping of a heavy wave, still forbade all thoughts or hopes of comfort, but the dread of shipwreck troubled us no more, and I passed the day in contriving how to stand long enough on my legs to get my wet traps from my floating portmanteau." It was indeed a wonderful escape, when one bears in mind the violence of the tempest, the dangerous nature of the navigation, and the fact that not a man was lost or even seriously injured, and that the ship, though battered, remained seaworthy.

But there was yet a serious trouble facing Mr. Willis. He was desirous of spending some time at Malta, and had, in truth, important business there. But there were great difficulties in the way of getting him there, near as the *Metamora* was to the spot. The skipper could not land his passenger at that port, and that for two reasons. First, there was the question of the insurance. The policy contained no mention of a call at Malta, and the underwriters would have refused payment if loss should

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have occurred after such an alteration of course—a very serious risk for any skipper to run. In the second place, had the *Metamora* made the port, she would have been quarantined, coming as she did from Asia Minor. To set Mr. Willis ashore in one of the ship's boats was almost equally out of the question. Her smaller boat had gone in the storm; the long-boat was too heavy for the exhausted sailors to get out and launch; at least the captain did not feel that he could reasonably call on the poor fellows to make the effort at present. All this came as a series of knock-down blows to the passenger, as well they might. There remained only Gibraltar, near which the vessel would pass, and there, he well knew, they would not have him at any price. In that case he must, willy-nilly, go the whole distance to America, a pleasant prospect to one who must needs stop at Malta! Presently a pilot boat came along.

"Do you want a pilot?" was shouted.

"No!" thundered the American skipper. The pilot was turning away when the captain asked, "Will you take a passenger ashore?"

"Where from?"

"Smyrna."

"No-c-o!" came the reply.

"I knew how it would be, sir," the captain remarked, turning to his disconsolate passenger. "He wouldn't put himself and his boat's crew into twenty days' quarantine to oblige you and me."

And the kindly fellow began to comfort Mr. Willis by the assurance that they would land him in New York in no time, and that he could then soon return to Malta! A matter of eight thousand miles home and out again seemed a trifle to the master mariner. Just then the

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pilot returned and offered to tow the passenger ashore in the long-boat, but the sum he asked was exorbitant. The skipper, in a rage at this attempted extortion, gave the pilot a bit of his mind in no measured terms. The man and his crew slunk off crestfallen and chagrined, while the passenger, at this point giving way to an uncontrollable fit of passion, stamped about the deck, execrating almost everything and everybody. Captain and crew looked on in silence.

All at once the skipper called his hands together and put the case before them. He would not have asked his men, he said, to do what he was about to request, except to serve a fellow-creature in his time of trouble and necessity. Exhausted though they were, would they try to get out the long-boat? The instant and cheerful "Ay, ay, sir," that came as one shout from the throats of these fine fellows, was a thing never to be forgotten by the man on whose behalf all that heavy labour had to be undertaken. "From the chief mate to the black cabin-boy, every man sprang cheerily to the lashings." It meant exhausting toil, long continued, and not without danger, to heave out the heavy craft and get her over the side in such a tempest-tossed sea. But the task was accomplished, and at the end of it not a man would accept a penny for his trouble. With a full heart Mr. Willis shook hands with the gallant and generous-natured sailors, and left the ship. And when he landed, we can well understand his feelings when he says, "I shook the hard fist of the kind-hearted skipper on the quarantine stairs, and watched his heavy boat as she crept out of the little harbour, with tears in my eyes."

CHAPTER XIII

THE SAVAGES OF VANCOUVER

Captain Vancouver—The *Discovery* and the *Chatham* sail for the Pacific—An early circumnavigator—Always tries to conciliate the savages—At Nootka Sound—A sudden attack by canoes—English boats in danger—The war dress and weapons of the Indians—Savages attempt to grab everything—Indians seize the boat—An odd mask—Savages egged on by an old woman—A lively time for Vancouver—His endeavours to preserve peace—Two sailors badly wounded—Orders to fire—Hasty and ludicrous flight—Attack from the top of the cliff—Reconciliation—A friendly visit from the chiefs—A squabble between two native factions—A savage sea-fight averted.

MOST people are aware in a general way that the large island of Vancouver, off the western coast of British Columbia, was named after a navigator, Vancouver, but it is to be feared that this famous sailor and discoverer is not so well known as he deserves to be. He takes high rank as a sea-captain and an explorer, and amongst the great mariners of his day he was surpassed only by that king of navigators, the immortal Captain Cook.

Captain Vancouver was, in 1790, sent to the Pacific as commander of the Government sloop *Discovery*, a new vessel, of 340 tons, and carrying ten four-pounders and ten swivels, with a crew of 130 men and officers. Amongst the latter were Lieutenant Puget, whose name survives in Puget Sound, and Surgeon Menzies, a capable botanist, who was commissioned to make researches into the plant

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life of the coasts of that part of the North American continent. The *Discovery* had as companion ship the *Chatham*, under Lieutenant Broughton. This latter vessel had a crew of forty-five men, and mounted three four-pounders and six swivels. The object of Vancouver's expedition was twofold, the first political, the other scientific and geographical. There had been difficulties with Spain respecting the territory in the neighbourhood of Nootka Sound, and the Spanish had not long before actually seized a portion of the British possessions out there. But the difficulties had now been cleared away, and Spain was willing to relinquish her seizure. Vancouver's first duty was to proceed to Nootka Sound, and there formally receive back the territory. That done, he was to explore the north-west coast of North America, and gain all possible information as to those regions. He voyaged out by way of the Cape of Good Hope and Australia to the Sandwich Islands, and thence to Vancouver Island, while on his return journey he rounded Cape Horn and crossed the Atlantic. Captain Vancouver was thus one of the earlier circumnavigators of the globe.

It is greatly to his credit that, unlike some explorers, Vancouver was ever anxious to deal fairly and humanely by the savage peoples he met with, and was always at much pains to avoid quarrels and bloodshed. His policy was to *conciliate* the natives, and with this intent he often tried to induce some of them to go aboard his vessels, where they would receive some little present, much to their delight. After having with great difficulty persuaded a man to step on board the *Discovery*, Vancouver thus describes what took place. "On his entering the ship, he trembled and was much agitated; apprehension, astonishment, and admiration, equally appearing at the

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same instant, and though, on his being made welcome after the usual fashion, and presented with a small iron adze, his countenance became more serene and cheerful, yet he still appeared in a state of great anxiety." The savage at length went off delighted, and soon returned with numbers of his brethren. A sharp look-out had to be kept; these natives, like others in those seas, were ready to seize anything they could lay hands on and carry away.

His political mission at Nootka Sound having been successfully completed, Captain Vancouver began his exploration of the coast. Here he was destined to meet with difficulties from the aborigines, many tribes of whom were by no means disposed to be friendly. His first experience of the suspicion and hostility of the natives was this. The commander and some of his men were near the shore in two boats, one the *Discovery's* launch, the other the yawl, a much smaller craft. The ships themselves were anchored in a bay some miles up the coast. The Englishmen were puzzling over the smoke which arose from a cluster of trees, no sign of human habitation being seen anywhere. Suddenly a couple of canoes shot out, containing between a dozen and twenty natives. These fellows expressed a savage ferocity beyond any Vancouver had ever seen before. Their faces were painted with red and black and white, making a hideous show. The savages dashed up to the smaller of the two boats, in which were the captain, Lieutenant Puget, and one or two men only. The launch was some distance away. The natives approached quite close, evidently feeling no fear. According to his custom Vancouver offered them presents of trinkets and various other articles, but to his great surprise all were scornfully and angrily rejected.

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Accordingly the captain turned his attention to a hideous old woman, the only female of the party, who seemed mad with rage against the white intruders. She contemptuously refused their offers, while a savage-looking fellow, presumably her husband, "arranged his spears, about six or eight in number, and placed them with their points just over the bow of the canoe, where he sat; he also laid near him his bow with some arrows; then put on his war garment, and drew his dagger." The men in the other canoe made similar demonstrations, and things began to wear an ugly look.

The launch was still a long way behind, too far to be of service, should the savages at once begin the fierce attack for which they were preparing. The position was critical, and had the explorer been a man of less tact and coolness, it would have been a fatal one. Without exhibiting the least sign of fear, the captain renewed his offers of presents, and did his best to make the Indians understand that he was ready to do a trade with them. It was useless; they would have none of it; and, egged on by the screeching old woman, the men prepared for the onset. Vancouver temporised, and still tried all he knew to conciliate the fellows. He managed so well that he held the savages at arm's length till the launch came up, and both boats pulled towards the shore. The Indians now altered their tone completely, and even permitted the Englishmen to land. Strangely enough, too, they were now eager to trade, a thing they had refused before with rage and execrations and threats. It was easy to see, however, that the Indians were restrained from giving play to their ferocity only by the fact that they believed themselves to be outmanned by the pale faces. They wanted but the opportunity, and they would soon show

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of what they were capable. The Englishmen had proof of this almost at once.

Captain Vancouver gives a picturesque description of the war dress and weapons of these peculiarly savage peoples, and it is worth quoting.

“Their spears, about sixteen feet long, were pointed with iron, wrought in several simple forms, amongst which some were barbed. Their bows were well constructed, and their arrows, with which they were plentifully supplied, appeared but rude, and were pointed with bone or iron. Each man was provided with an iron dagger, suspended from his neck in a leathern sheath, seemingly intended to be used when in close action. Their war garments were formed of two, three, or more folds, of the strongest hides of the land animals they are able to procure. In the centre was a hole sufficient to admit the head and left arm to pass through; the mode of wearing them being over the right shoulder and under the left arm. The left side of this garment is sewed up, but the right side remains open; the body is, however, tolerably well protected, and both arms are left at liberty for action. As a further security, on the part which covers the breast they sometimes fix on the inside thin laths of wood; the whole is seemingly well constructed.”

After taking observations the party again embarked with the object of carrying on the survey, during which the launch had a narrow escape from utter destruction. At one part of the shore a cleft in the rocks appeared, through which the water was rushing like a mill-race into a depression or basin very much below the level of the sea. The boat unfortunately was caught in its influence and could make no headway. Vancouver, who was some

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distance behind in the yawl, hurried up, and after superhuman efforts on the part of both crews, the launch was extricated from its perilous position with the sailors in a thoroughly exhausted condition.

More of the natives now sprang out from somewhere, and several canoes appeared on the sea, four of them at least large and well manned. For a time the natives kept a friendly attitude, and even accepted trifling presents. Vancouver's suspicions were lulled by this conduct, so he landed, leaving Puget in the yawl. But before long they began to throw off the mask, and on Vancouver's return he was informed that the natives had attempted to grab everything within their reach. It was clear the Indians were bent on plunder, and, moreover, were preparing for violence. When objections were raised by the Englishmen to this wholesale pilfering, the savages started to yell at the top of their voices, shouting for the big war canoes to come up. The situation began to be anything but reassuring for the sailors.

Vancouver ordered his boats to be rowed quickly away, thinking thereby to rid himself of the enemy, for such the savages now plainly showed themselves to be. Instantly the fellows seized the craft at various points and held her back. Sometimes they would lose their hold for a moment, but only to grab the boat's quarters again. Nevertheless the Englishmen managed to make some little progress, and were beginning to think that they might after all get clear away without violence. Just then one of the biggest of the canoes, which was likewise steered by a hideous old woman, who wore a frightful lip ornament, shot right across their bows and stopped all farther advance. In a twinkling the hag lashed the yawl to her canoe with the lead-line. A young fellow, prob-

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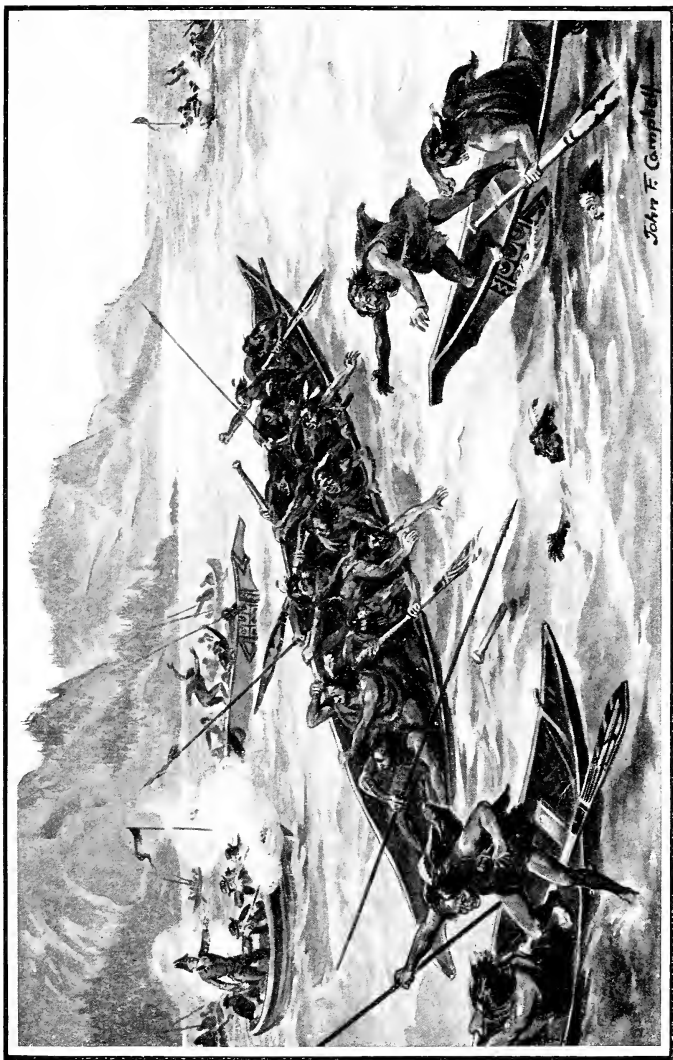
ably the chief, sprang on board the boat, and, sitting down in the bow, put on a mask showing a mixture of a wolf's head and human face. At the same moment one of his men coolly snatched a musket out of the boat. The position of affairs looked bad for Vancouver and Puget as the launch had again drifted to a distance. The treachery of the Indians was only too clear now. There was nothing but to begin another parley, to gain time, and Vancouver stepped to the front of his boat to speak to the chief, but carrying a gun in his hand. On this "the surrounding Indians, about fifty in number, seized their daggers, brandished their spears, and pointed them towards us in all directions." It seemed as if the Englishmen would instantly be killed, for the launch, though coming towards the spot, was yet some distance away.

Captain Vancouver, with marvellous patience and tact, not to mention coolness, stood his ground and proceeded to parley. He succeeded so well that he might have ultimately pacified the angry savages but for the old woman and her husband, a ferocious brute, who sat near her in the big war canoe. While the woman yelled and screamed in fury to excite the rest, the old man, helped by others of his party, seized the oars, so that the boat's crew could not stir an inch from the spot. While this was going on in the fore-part of the boat, Puget had an awkward time of it at the stern, the natives brandishing their spears with furious threatening gestures. The captain seeing this ran aft, and for the moment the savages in that quarter quieted down a little. But the instant Vancouver left the bow, the troubles began there again. Once more he flew to the front, when every spear was suddenly dropped again, singular to relate. Thus the

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captain ran distracted from one end of the boat to the other, the demonstrations rapidly becoming more alarming. Soon "a general commotion seemed to have taken place; some spears were thrust, one or two of which passed very near me, and the Indians in all directions began to seize all the movables in our boat that they could possibly reach, and to commit other acts of violence. Our destruction now seemed almost inevitable; as I could hardly flatter myself that the force we had to oppose against the numbers that surrounded us, and, as it were, held us so completely within their power, would have been sufficient to make them retire."

Things could not go on long in this fashion, and, fortunately, deliverance was at hand. The launch had come within pistol-range, and the captain, greatly against his will, however, was compelled in self-defence to give the order to fire. He had tried his best to avoid this last resource, but in vain. The volleys crashed from both the English boats at the same instant. The effect on the Indians was as astonishing as it was satisfactory to the white men. Vancouver had fully expected that the savages, who themselves had serviceable pistols and muskets, and knew how to use them, would have shown stubborn fight, in which case the Englishmen would have had little chance, seeing the overwhelming numbers of the enemy as compared with their own. Luckily the natives were struck with mortal terror, and a lively spectacle was seen amongst them. "Those in the small canoes jumped into the sea, whilst those in the large ones, by getting all on one side, raised the opposite sides of their canoes, so that they were protected from the fire of the yawl, though they were in some measure exposed to that of the launch, and in this manner they scrambled sideways to the shore."



AN ASTONISHING EFFECT

Much against his will Vancouver gave the order to fire, when those in the small canoes leapt out and swam to shore, while those in the large ones tilted them to one side, and so screened themselves while making for the shore.

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A good riddance, happily. But the savages had decidedly "scored," to use a very modern phrase. They had managed to carry off three muskets, a fowling-piece, a couple of cartridge-boxes, a few books, and several odds and ends, leaving to the rightful owners only a blunderbuss, a musket, another fowling-piece loaded with small shot, and a brace of pistols. There was fortunately in the boat a chest containing a good supply of weapons, which had not been rifled.

Vancouver at once served out these arms, and prepared to inflict heavy chastisement on the treacherous savages. His intention was to destroy all the canoes he could reach, and he gave the necessary orders. But he found just then that two of his men had been badly wounded, though the sturdy fellows had thus far kept the matter to themselves, and had gone on fighting, notwithstanding their injuries. Ever humane, the captain refused to do anything more till these unfortunate sailors were attended to. The Indians consequently got themselves to shore, and afterwards appeared on the top of the lofty cliffs overlooking the boats, and there they got ready for an effective attack as well as for defence.

Heavy stones in showers were now hurled down from the top of the rocks upon the Englishmen, when at length Vancouver and his crews drew near. Some of the missiles fell into the launch, even at a distance of thirty or forty yards. All the guns the natives had stolen they held ready, as well as some of their own. One of the first was fired, but did no harm; as for the other weapons, Vancouver was of opinion that they were not loaded, ammunition having apparently run short among the Indians. "One of the most savage-looking fellows amongst them, just as I gave orders to fire, snapped his piece at me; but

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it missed fire, and he immediately laid it down and took up his spear with all imaginable composure." Vancouver withdrew his boats to a point beyond range, till he had made all arrangements for an effective joint attack by both his boats.

Lieutenant Swaine, who had been in charge of the launch, took this opportunity of describing to his chief what had taken place before the launch had come to the rescue of the yawl. The story corresponded closely with that which Vancouver himself had to tell—the apparently friendly approach by the natives—the crowding around—the attempts at pilfering—the discontent among the fellows when they were made to keep their distance—a hag at the rudder exciting the men to the attack—all had been repeated in almost exactly the same way and the same order as in the case of the yawl. The launch party, seeing that hostilities were intended, had seized their weapons and stood on the defensive, with the effect of causing the savages to loose their hold of the boat and fall back a little. Then the Indians had suddenly left the launch, and had made off at full speed for the yawl. As they were paddling towards Vancouver and Puget, they took up their spears from the bottom of the canoes. Lieutenant Swaine, seeing clearly that the savages meant mischief, had hurried after the canoes. An exciting race had taken place, the launch, luckily, reaching the spot in time to be of such signal service to the commander and his companions in their fearful danger. Such was the tale the lieutenant had to tell.

Captain Vancouver, on consideration, thought it better, in spite of all that had passed, to adopt a policy of conciliation rather than proceed to measures of severity and revenge, and this for several reasons. He had a good deal

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of surveying to do, and would thus have to land often and come in contact with the natives. Moreover, his natural disposition was always greatly averse from unfriendliness towards ignorant savages. Accordingly he withdrew, and a day or two later invited a couple of chiefs to visit his ships, which were anchored off the coast. The chiefs took with them a party of twenty-five men in canoes, and were hospitably received by the commander and his officers. The Indians were much impressed by what they saw, and showed the utmost friendliness, and Vancouver felt that he had gained an important point. Oddly enough, the savages were more delighted with the bread and treacle than with anything else given them. But they liked whale oil almost as well!

Apparently there were others of the Indians who were by no means pleased by the action of the two friendly chiefs, and, to the surprise of everybody, a large war canoe full of armed and shouting men appeared close to the *Chatham*. Instantly the visitors to the ships sprang into their own canoes alongside, grasped their weapons, and prepared for conflict. The Englishmen looked on while a curious scene followed. Steadily the hostile crews rowed towards each other, the warriors standing, lances in hand, ready to begin the fray. All the while angry shouting from both parties was going on, with excited gesticulations. The Englishmen felt certain they were about to witness a miniature sea-fight. Both sides had guns and pistols, all very bright, and apparently in good order.

After much parley, however, an understanding seemed to have been arrived at. But the settlement was not yet final, as soon appeared. "Just as they came alongside the *Discovery*, one of the chiefs who had been on board,

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drew, with much haste, from within the breast of his war garment, a large iron dagger, and appeared to be extremely irritated by something that had been said by those in the large canoe, who again, with great coolness, took up their pistols and blunderbusses." Nevertheless, the expected conflict did not take place, and finally, a satisfactory peace was made, and the weapons on both sides were carefully wrapped up and put away. It is more than probable that had not the English vessels been in the vicinity there would have been a savage sea-battle.

In the long run Captain Vancouver managed so well that he put an end to all suspicion and hostility on the part of the Indians, and was able to pursue his surveying operations in peace. To celebrate and ratify this friendly understanding between Indian and pale face, the chiefs organised a spectacle. They decked themselves out in magnificent war paint and feathers, came off in the largest canoe, and paddled round the men-of-war, singing their songs the while. This was followed by a strange entertainment of music, and acting, and posturing, the performance seeming to cause intense delight and amusement to the crowds of natives assembled.

CHAPTER XIV

ENGLISH BARQUES AND LA PLATAN SHOALS

The "English Bank"—The *Aglaia*—Risky salvage operations—She floats again—Hawsers snap—Rescue of the crew by the tug *Plata*—Destruction of the *Aglaia*—Another vessel on the Bank—A dash to the rescue—Fruitless attempts—Tugs return to Monte Video for coal—To the rescue again—Second failure—A third attempt—The barque not to be seen!—A search and a find—*Plata* creeps to within sixty yards of the wreck—Franco goes off in small boat—Rescues four men—His second trip rescues five—Third trip brings off the remaining four—A bump and a splintered stern-post—Full steam on and pumps working—All safe in port—Rewards from the British Government.

PROUD as every Anglo-Saxon and every Britisher should be of the long and brave record of the achievements of his race and nation, he has long since given up that old notion which once held possession of him, namely, that no other peoples are worth mentioning on the same day with his own. The present chapter is to be devoted to a striking instance of the deeds of daring that may be witnessed at times in even the most distant corners of the world.

All are familiar with the map of South America, showing the vast La Plata estuary, on whose shores stands Buenos Ayres, now the largest town in the Southern Hemisphere, and the equally well-known town of Monte Video. What is not so well known is the existence at

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the mouth of this great opening of an extensive shoal, or series of shoals, the "English Bank," a terror to all navigators in that part of the world. On this treacherous bit of the Atlantic two fine English barques were wrecked in the same storm, some twenty years ago. The story of the rescue of the crews of these vessels, the *Aglaia* and the *Georgina*, especially the latter, is one which for thrilling interest and for conspicuous pluck and determination on the part of the rescuers even the grand annals of the British Lifeboat Service cannot surpass.

It was in the month of August, 1889, the February, one may say, of the southern latitudes, when, during a frightful storm, the British barque *Aglaia* ran aground on this "English Bank," some twenty-five miles out at sea from Monte Video. The crew were compelled to abandon her. However, a few fine days succeeding, salvage operations were vigorously carried on. But about noon on the fourth day of the work, when the salvage was almost completed, another storm began to gather, and by evening it had burst forth in fury. Nevertheless, in spite of the tempest, and the extreme darkness of the night, the gallant crews of the two Monte Video tug steamers *Emperor* and *Uruguay* persevered in their labours.

The *Aglaia*, now cleared of her heavy cargo, and further lightened by the use of the pumps, showed signs of floating off when the tide should rise a little higher, the two tugs meantime straining at the stout hawsers that attached them to the stranded barque. For hours the men worked, exposed to the mountainous seas that swept over them every minute, and to the furious winds that howled and shrieked; all the while in intensest darkness, save when, at frequent intervals, the bewildering

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and blinding flashes of lightning lit up far and near the storm-tossed ocean. The danger to the tugs was very great, too, from another quarter; should the *Aglaia* suddenly float off, she might come upon them with a rush and possibly shatter the two steamers to pieces.

All at once the cables fall slack, but are immediately stretched taut again. The barque is moving. But she is bumping here and there on the sandy shoal, as those on board of her can feel only too well. The stokers are now ordered to pile up the furnaces of the tugs, and a last big effort is made. Men stand ready to cut the cables in the twinkling of an eye in case the barque should come surging suddenly on the steamers. Hurrah! Cheers burst from every throat. The *Aglaia* floats again! Hard and terribly dangerous toil has been rewarded by success.

But stay! there is the tempest to be reckoned with. At that very moment the gale bore down upon the spot with such an access of fury that instantly the thick hawsers were snapped as if they had been pieces of pack-thread. Only the chain cable held. A great cry came from the fifty-six men who were at work on the *Aglaia*, a cry echoed by their brethren on board the tugs. The barque had no anchor; she was rapidly filling. Should the cable give way, she would be instantly hurled upon some one of the rocks near. Even should the chain continue to hold, the vessel would in a very few minutes founder. To save the men in such deadly peril was now the task of the tug crews.

Fortunately a third steam-tug, the *Plata*, was by this time at hand, with a ketch in tow. The *Emperor* and the *Uruguay* did their best to keep the barque from falling into the trough of the sea, while the *Plata*, going

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to the sheltered side, began to get off the men. For two hours, in the darkness, and with all the fury of the tempest upon them, the rescuers worked, conspicuous among them a gallant fellow, Nicolas Ramasso. Every soul was taken out of the doomed vessel. The risk run by the rescuing steamers was, as it always is under such circumstances, far greater than the ordinary landsman can understand. There is the danger of running upon shoals or sunken rocks; the vessel in tow may suddenly dash upon the tugs and bring destruction with it; the cable may, in the wild tossings of the sea, become fouled with the screws.

The last man had been taken off the barque—it seemed as if the tempest had awaited this moment—when with a whir the strong wire hawsers parted, and the *Aglaia* was free of control. “Like an untamed colt,” says one excellent account of the disaster, “that on obtaining its liberty rushes wildly across the plain and charges against any obstacle that may interrupt its mad career, so that dismantled vessel, once more free, without either bit or bridle, rushed madly upon the very rocks from which she had, but a short time since, been rescued almost undamaged!” Thus perished the *Aglaia*, on August 29th, 1889, but, happily, without the loss of a single life. There was no more to be done, and the brave tugmen started for home, deeply regretting that their work, which had so brilliantly saved the crew, should have failed to save the ship also.

The steamers had not gone far in the direction of Monte Video when the sailors became aware of lights away out at sea. It was a signal for assistance; and all at once, during a vivid lightning flash, a vessel was seen on the rocks in a most dangerous part of the Bank, a

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part which it would be almost impossible for any rescuing craft to reach. For a few moments the spectacle drives to despair the crews of the Monte Video tugs. Nothing can be done for the stranded ship or her men out yonder; both are lost. But the skippers of the *Plata* and the other steamers are not the men to abandon fellow-mortals in their direst peril, and they at once set their course for the fatal spot. Those gallant men are "going to defy death that they may save the living!"

The oldest sailor of the party could not remember so wild a night. "Dark was the sky, and covered with dense and heavily-charged clouds which, in rushing together, gave forth, amidst horrible confusion, terrific claps of thunder, flashes of lightning, and fierce gusts of wind and rain, which mixed with the tempestuous roaring of the awful storm and the noisy rush of the waves!" All night long, in utter darkness, except for the blinding flashes, and swept continuously by the heavy seas, the crews of the tug-boats endeavoured to get near the stranded barque. It was a task full of tremendous risk. "Several times, as the stern fell from the top of a gigantic mountain of water, the heel of the tugs would touch bottom, shaking their entire hulls, making even the hearts of their intrepid crews tremble." Thus passed the night, nothing yet accomplished, or, apparently, capable of being accomplished. The daylight revealed those on board the wrecked vessel clinging for their lives to the masts and rigging, and exposed to the full fury of the biting blasts and the dashing seas. Yet nothing, absolutely nothing, could be done for the poor wretches. Moreover, as the coal was fast giving out, it was imperative that the tugs should at once run to port for

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more before any effective help could be given. With a sigh the skippers gave the necessary orders.

Who can imagine the feelings of the unhappy sailors thus left behind on the stranded ship when they saw the steamers turn away! The poor souls were being abandoned to their fate, and what a fate! Exposed to the awful hurricane and the roaring seas, to hunger and thirst, to cold and darkness—till when? Till that moment, inevitable and not far distant, when their barque could stand no more, and should hurl them, mingled with its own fragments, into the voracious maw of the maddened ocean! It is a marvel that any man of them all retained his sanity.

When the crews of the tugs reached Monte Video and told their tale, the heart of the entire city went out to the sufferers away on the “English Bank.” Something must be done to save them, cost what it might. But how? Though there were plenty of stout vessels, and even war-ships, in harbour, it would have been madness to send any of them out to sea in such a storm. As for the small lifeboats, the rocket-apparatus, and the like, they were all useless at that distance. The city was almost frantic that nothing could be done.

But meanwhile the masters and crews of the *Emperor* and the *Plata* had been hastily coaling, and the tugs presently departed, none of the men having left the boats even to run home for a few minutes. It was amidst intense excitement among the watching crowds that the tugs steamed away again. The hardy sailors themselves were “guided by the sacred fire of the sublime valour which leads to heroism and renders mortals immortal!” An anxious night passed for the people of the town, and on the morrow an eager look-out was kept

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for the steamers. At length they were seen returning. Had they been successful? That was the question of questions just then. Alas, no! even those gallant, almost recklessly gallant, fellows had been unable to get near the ship, and for the second time the poor wretches clinging to her had seen with sickening dismay and hopeless dread the departure of the steamers.

For a time Monte Video was, as it were, stunned by the awful position of things. Yet there was at least one man among the citizens who could not rest. It was Señor Antonio D. Lussich, a member of an eminent mercantile firm out there. This noble man, unable to go himself to the rescue, sent an urgent epistle to his servants Preve and Borrazas—the steamers were the property of the firm—praising them for their splendid attempts, but imploring them to try yet once more. The skippers at once sent a reply that they would start as soon as possible, and, at four in the morning, the *Emperor* and the *Plata* for the third time left for the Bank, every man enthusiastic and believing in his heart that success would attend upon this third expedition.

A crushing disappointment awaited them. “After four hours of rolling and tossing they reached their destination, but alas! empty space, sombre and terrifying, and foam-capped breakers boiling and surging over that immense stretch of hidden sands, were all that their longing eyes could discover. The vessel had disappeared, and with her, perhaps, the unfortunate crew, who in the throes of their prolonged agony had struggled till their last breath.” Well may Señor Lussich add of the heroic tug-boat men, “in all the wrath of the deepest execration they protested against the abominable cruelty of the sea that had accomplished such hateful work.”

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But the hope that "springs eternal in the human breast" did not quite abandon the heroic Monte Video men. They would at least steam round the Bank, if possible, in the hope of picking up any wretch who might still have life left in him. A man was sent to the look-out and the steamers ploughed their way through the storm, which had abated not one whit of its violence. Suddenly the look-out man gave a great shout of joy. He perceived sticking up out of the waters the masts of the missing vessel, the hull having sunk beneath the waves. He saw more, a number of men still hanging to the rigging, a thing almost incredible. The barque had been washed a long way from the spot where she had originally struck. The enthusiasm among the steamer crews rose to the intensest pitch. Their hearts beat within their breast with a violence that was painful, and with loud shouts the sailors crept nearer to the fatal spot, the sea becoming shallower as they progressed.

The *Emperor*, captained by Borrazas, a splendid fellow, after many thumps, at length struck the bottom with such violence that it would plainly be sheer madness to go on. For the third time the skipper, heart-sick, had to turn away from the shipwrecked crew and leave further attempts to the *Plata*, a vessel of lighter draught, commanded by Faccio, a worthy peer to Borrazas.

With caution, and constantly sounding, Faccio advanced. It was terribly risky work, but it was done. Within a hundred and fifty yards the *Plata* came—a hundred yards—sixty! No nearer could the tug approach; whatever was to be done now would have to be by other means. The rescuers wanted no encouragement or stimulus to put forth their utmost exertions. There, on the bowsprit of the sunken vessel, hung desperately

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the captain and eight other men, while four more were in the mizen cross-tree. For sixty-two hours had they endured all the terrors of the storm, with the awful never-ceasing apprehension that the next minute would be their last. It is to be remembered that this is no heightened story of fiction, but a plain statement of actual fact.

The *Plata* was now anchored so that her boat, which was to be sent off, should be carried towards the wreck. The boat was launched, but a strong rope to keep it connected with the tug was paid out as required. Preve, one of the sailors, was very anxious to go in the skiff, but he was too valuable a sailor—he had a better acquaintance than the rest with the shoals and currents thereabouts—to be allowed to take the risk, and, bitterly disappointed, he had to give way to Franco, who splendidly justified the choice of his captain. Into the skiff at once Franco leapt, a cord round his waist as an extra safeguard; if, as seemed almost inevitable, the little boat should be dashed to pieces, he at least might be drawn back to the *Plata*. Thus the “little nutshell of a boat” went on her dangerous way, “at one moment seeming to touch the clouds and at the next to be buried in the abyss.”

The craft reached the sunken vessel near the mizen-mast, and Franco called on the four men clinging there to come down. It was impossible; they could not descend to the boat and to safety, though hope had come again, if feebly, to their despairing souls. Franco did not hesitate, but clambered up to the assistance of the poor wretches. “Encouraging one, and holding up others, he helped down by the ratlines those four unfortunates, who, half fainting from exhaustion and shaking with cold, bore on their bodies indelible marks of their long martyrdom.” Then carefully, cleverly, successfully the man helped his

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brother mariners into the boat. It was a splendid thing splendidly done. By signs giving the nine on the bowsprit to understand that he would speedily fetch them also, Franco pushed off for the tug, his little craft unfitted to carry a heavier load. As for the rescued sailors, they strove to thank the noble fellow, but not a sound escaped from their parched throats. It was a touching sight when the poor men were lifted on board the *Plata*, to be received with mingled shouts of joy and broken sobs.

Franco was off again instantly; to no other would he give place. His was a far more difficult task this time. To reach the bowsprit he must coast along the side of the ship. But how? The lee side lay in confusion and projecting far into the sea, a tangled mass of broken mast and cordage and chain, while on the weather quarter the *Plata's* little boat could not have lived for half a dozen seconds. But Franco, not to be beaten, with marvellous pluck and skill moved "carefully from one chain-plate to another, till he reached the cat-head, and from there the bowsprit." Under this he placed his boat, so as to make it easier for the sailors to drop into her, if they should prove to be capable of helping themselves at all.

One of those on the bowsprit was the captain, a man with rough, bronzed features, but with a heart as tender as any woman's, as sailors' hearts not uncommonly are. He at once pointed to those he would have saved first, for he well understood that the boat could not carry the nine men at one trip. "I shall not leave the vessel till all the rest have left," the skipper declared, as Franco pushed off with five of the poor fellows. That these were received by the *Plata* men with enthusiastic joy and loving ministrations, as the former batch had been, may well be imagined.

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As for Franco, he is already on his way to the barque again. Another tossing sea and another dangerous creep along the vessel's side, and he is once more under the bowsprit. Three of the remaining four are helped down, and lastly the captain, heart-broken, but overwhelmed with gratitude, also drops into the boat. The poor fellow waves his trembling hands in the direction of the ship in token of farewell; perhaps she carried the whole fortune, now lost, which he had gathered for his wife and children.

Thirteen lives saved in all! There had been a fourteenth on board the *Georgina*, an English barque from Newport, for such the wrecked vessel proved to be. He was a lad of fifteen, and he had been struck by a wave, while he was attempting to pass from one part of the wreck to another, and swept helplessly away, to the keen distress of his comrades. This had occurred many hours before the *Plata* had been able to approach for the rescue.

The tug at once started for the port, the sea as dangerous as ever, as was presently shown in a startling way. A mighty billow suddenly raised the *Plata* high on its crest, and then as suddenly dropped her to the depths beneath. Her keel crashed against the bottom, splintering the stern-post. The water at once rushed in, to the alarm of the crew. But the skipper did not lose his head for a moment. Giving the order to turn on full steam, in a twinkling he had the pumps working at top speed. It was a trying time, but the heroic exertions of the sailors had their reward. For full three hours the tug battled with the storm without and the water within, and at length landed her thirteen saved mortals at Monte Video, amidst such a scene of excitement and joy as the city has rarely witnessed.

Well earned were the rewards sent by the British

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Government to the gallant rescuers—gold medal to Faccio, the skipper of the *Plata*, and to the intrepid Franco; a silver medal for “gallantry” to Borrazas, the captain of the *Emperor*; two pounds each to the *Plata* men, and one pound to those of the sister tug. Well deserved, too, were the words of unstinted praise spoken by the British Minister, who presented the rewards to the heroic seamen. And none assisted at the presentation ceremony with greater joy than Señor Lussich himself, the owner of the rescuing vessels, and the proud employer and friend of the sturdy recipients.

From *Celebrated Shipwrecks at Cape Polonio, off the English Bank, etc.*, by Antonio D. Lussich. (Translated by Henry C. Ayre.) Published (1894) by Turenne, Varzi and Co., 324 Uruguay Street, Monte Video, South America. By kind permission of the author.

CHAPTER XV

A LONDON JACK-TAR

James Choyce—Prentice on board whaler—Wooden guns!—A risky swimming lesson—Taken prisoner by the Spanish—A canoe seized—Upset—Sufferings from want of water—A raid on a water-carrier—A stream—Caught by the Spaniards—A fresh plan—The *Lucky Escape*—Mule-drivers attempt to lasso the sailors—A Spanish brig seized—A course set for Galapagos Islands—A drunken crew—Threats—Anxious days—A dark outlook for Choyce—"Land ho!"—Free men at last.

MANY are the thrilling, and true, stories of seafaring life that have already been told, yet it is probable that quite as large a number remain yet to be told. Every now and then the narrative of some sturdy mariner of bygone days is published, and eagerly read, as is natural in a land where Sailor Jack is ever a favourite. Such a story is that of James Choyce, a typical British seaman of the days when Britain was defended by her "wooden walls." His varied adventures, and his numberless escapes, make good reading, and Choyce had in full measure that characteristic quality of the British sailor of never knowing when he was beaten.

Choyce was London born and bred, as we should reckon in our days, though he himself tells us he first saw the light "at a place called Finchley," a "few miles from London." His father was a farmer, but James had no mind to follow the plough, and accordingly one day he

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apprenticed himself, at the age of seventeen, to the master of a South Sea whaler, the *London*.

After a fishing season spent in the South Atlantic and Antarctic seas, the *London* was returning to England in the company of another slow sailer, the *Barbary*. It was a time of general war in Europe—at the close of the eighteenth century—and it behoved mariners to keep a sharp look-out for enemies. The captain of the *London*, Choyce's vessel, made preparations for any possible attack. His fourteen four-pounders were in good order, and he painted his ship afresh, so as to give the whaler something of the smart appearance of a warship. The *Barbary*, on the other hand, had but a couple of guns. The two skippers therefore determined to make more, but of wood! Fourteen were to be for the *Barbary*, and four others to supplement the armament of the companion ship. Here were two vessels, then, carrying eighteen and sixteen guns respectively—a formidable couple! To use these wooden guns “they knotted old ropeyarns and balled them up, and in each ball was a six-pound cartridge of gunpowder. When they were to be used, a hole was made with a marlinespike in the ball of yarn and primed with powder. It was then tied to the muzzle of a wooden gun, and by setting fire to them they would make as much report as a six-pounder!”

It was not many days before this powerful armament seemed likely to be requisitioned for service. A big Dutch East Indiaman, as the Englishmen took her to be, hove in sight. As Holland was one of the countries hostile to us at that time, an attack by the Dutchmen might be expected. After consultation the two captains arranged that the *Barbary* should keep at a fair distance from the enemy, to prevent the wooden cannon from

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being detected, while the *London* was to engage at closer quarters. Presently the skipper of the latter, getting on the Indiaman's lee beam, fired across her bows, at the same time hoisting the American flag. The stranger, however, kept on her course, showing no colours. The Englishman thereupon gave chase, and, overhauling the other, fired again. On this the stranger flew the Portuguese colours and hove to, this to the no small satisfaction of the British skippers, for Portugal was a friendly State. It was perhaps as well that those wooden guns were after all not required to be brought into actual use!

It is possible that a century ago Finchley was not a great place for swimmers; anyhow, Choyce had reached the age of twenty, and had been three or four years a sailor, before he could swim. How he learnt, in one lesson and without instructor, he tells us. It was in the Gulf of Guayaquil, in South America. One day the surf upset a boat in which were Choyce and other sailors of his crew. As the bay was full of both sharks and sawfish, and the spot a quarter of a mile out, it may be supposed that each swimmer struck in mighty haste for the shore. Choyce, the only non-swimmer, was left behind. He seized the boat's warp, and clambered upon the bottom of the capsized craft, but only to be washed off again and again. He hung on to the rope for dear life, and an hour was passed in this desperate position, the boat floating parallel with the shore, instead of towards it, as the unfortunate fellow had hoped. At last it was borne in upon the young sailor that the sooner he learnt to swim the better. So, still holding fast to the rope, he attempted a few strokes. To his delight he found himself able to keep his head above water, and at length, in his own plucky way, and with lively apprehensions that the sharks might at any

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moment arrive on the scene, Choyce let go the cord, seizing the instant when a great wave, rolling shorewards, came, and made straight for land. His mates were watching him from the beach. The lad's fortune was equal to his pluck, and from that day Choyce was a swimmer. It was a fortunate thing for him that no sea monster came to disturb his lesson.

Not long afterwards Choyce was taken prisoner by the Spanish, along with the rest of his shipmates, and no small part of his subsequent adventures, for a time at least, are concerned with his various and numerous attempts, successful or the reverse, to escape. It says everything for the grit and determination of the man when it is related that it was not till the seventh attempt he got clear away. His first attempt was on this wise. He and his companions were set to work in the fields in the neighbourhood of the shore, and the sight of the wide ocean continually kept his mind revolving plans of evasion and escape. He worked steadily towards this end, beginning by providing a number of bladders in which to carry not only water, but his flint and steel, and so forth. His mates were all ready enough to join with him in *talk*, but when it came to actual effort, all hung back, except one.

In the middle of the night the two men crept down to the beach, where were a number of canoes with Indians sleeping in them. The risk the sailors ran was great, for there were many dogs keeping guard. Nothing daunted, the Englishmen crept in and out among the canoes in the hope of meeting with one unoccupied. Luckily, though the dogs barked a good deal, the Indians did not rouse sufficiently to perceive the intruders. At last finding a canoe empty, the two pushed off as silently as possible in her. They were dismayed when the occupant of the next

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boat began to talk. However, the man was too sleepy to say anything more than "Comrade, you are going too soon; it is not more than the middle of the night," to which remark the Englishmen naturally made no reply.

Reaching the part of the shore where the rest of the sailors were awaiting them, the adventurous pair took their mates on board, only to meet with early disaster, however. Not twenty yards from the beach the canoe upset with its too heavy load. All struck out for the shore, but many of the men had lost their boots, and, what was worse, several of the precious bladders of water were lost. The greater part of the men were inclined to sit down in helpless despair, but that did not suit Choyce, who, righting the boat, went off with three of his comrades on an enterprise that was almost more hazardous still. There lay, near the custom-house, and three hundred yards from the shore, a fine twelve-oared boat, and to get possession of this desirable craft Choyce was about to make a plucky attempt. He himself sat in the bows of the canoe as they rowed to the spot, ready with his dagger to stab any Spaniard there might be in the boat, so as to prevent him from raising an alarm. Luckily there was none to deal with, and the four sailors stole back with their prize. Embarking the rest, the party pushed off once more, taking four blankets to act as sails. They were in a desperate hurry to get away before the first signs of dawn, and it was now two o'clock, yet they turned back for one of their comrades, who had been afraid at first, but who, when they had put out a few yards, begged piteously for a place in the boat. The men rowed with all their might, and by nine o'clock were seven leagues from Callao. Then during the remainder of the day the tired sailors rested, the heat being intense.

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So far all was well enough. But now the very scanty provisioning of their boat began to set them thinking seriously on their position. Especially were they alarmed by the rapidly decreasing supply of fresh water. Choyce's companions began to blame him for bringing them away to endure hardships and sufferings, and some of them made very unpleasant remarks, not without dark hints of what might happen if the case became extreme. Choyce reminded them that it was only by concord and united effort that they could hope to escape at all. He proposed, he informed them, to run for the Galapagos Islands, where an English or an American ship might almost certainly be met with. On this the men took heart, and, placing one oar as a mast and another for a yard, they made a sail by fastening the blankets together.

To procure water was now the all-important thing, and the men were ready to run a good deal of risk to get it. Presently spying a house on the cliff, it was agreed that some of the men should go ashore in search of the great necessity. Six of the sailors went, the others remaining with the boat. The house had three inmates, a man and two lads, and these had by them some calabashes full of water. So maddened with thirst were the search party that the majority of them would have drunk up the stock of water on the spot, regardless of their comrades left in the boat. Choyce would stand no nonsense of this sort, and insisted on all sharing alike. The men were mightily refreshed by the welcome draughts, and went on again more cheerfully. They managed, all the same, to drift out of their course a good deal during the following night, and morning showed them to be entirely out of sight of land.

Now began a time of terrible suffering for the run-

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aways. They had hardly anything to eat; their thirst, after hours of rowing in the tropical heat, was as tormenting as ever; they were weary and exhausted, and they were scorched by the fierce rays of the sun. They lay down in the bottom of the boat, spread the sail over them to keep off the sun, and tried to sleep, hoping to find a breeze had sprung up by the time they should awake. A slight wind did come in the afternoon, but it lasted only a very short time, and another night of dead calm ensued. Fortunately for the poor fellows a thick mist arose, and they stripped to the skin to get the benefit of the cool moisture. Their bodies were burning as with fire, both inside and out. The relief thus gained cheered their drooping spirits a little, and they took to the oars again, half of the men rowing while the other half rested. But to their dismay they found when daylight came that the land was fully twenty miles away, and many of the crew gave way again to despair.

Their position was certainly serious. "Our faces were scorched as red as scarlet, and our lips and noses burnt to blisters, and some complained that their tongues were swelled and as dry as chips. None of us complained of hunger, but our thirst was so great that some of my comrades talked of jumping overboard." Then somebody bethought him of the plan of wetting their shirts with sea-water and putting them on again. The experiment was tried, and was found to answer so well that it was frequently resorted to. In spite of this alleviation, however, their plight was a bad one, and one of their number began to rave, and had to be tied down to prevent him from jumping overboard in his madness.

A day or two passed, but at length the crew ventured to draw near to the shore, eagerly looking out for signs

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of a stream. They were about to land in one place, but fortunately just in time observed a number of men with spears hiding behind a bank. The boat was hastily pushed off again, and the men coasted along for a few miles, till they came to a bay into which a river could be seen emptying itself. Desperate now, the sailors sprang ashore, tying the boat to a tree, and leaving in it the sick, light-headed man. With a mad rush they made for the stream, frantic with joy. They could not drink enough; some waded in up to their waists, some even rolled in the cool water. At last, with calabashes filled, they tore themselves from this delightful stream and made for the boat once more. Like a clap of thunder came on them the sight they saw there. A band of thirty or forty Spaniards were hauling the boat up the beach. Here was an end to all their sufferings and all their efforts! No other boat was to be seen, and to run into the interior meant almost certain death from wild beasts or serpents, even if they escaped capture for any length of time. To yield with a good grace was the only thing the Englishmen could do, especially as the Spaniards were advancing in fighting order.

A long series of imprisonments and labours, varied by many an attempt to escape, came for Choyce and his comrades. Disappointment succeeded disappointment in sickening fashion. But the man never lost heart, never relaxed his efforts to get himself free. At last came what seemed a more promising opportunity. A number of the Englishmen were employed at Callao in breaking up an old ship. They noted that they were left entirely to themselves in the work, their Spanish taskmasters never visiting the hulk. Here was Choyce's chance. He began to conceal in the half-dismantled ship stores of bread and

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water, with a quantity of rope and other things likely to be wanted. Watching their opportunity, they seized a small boat, one Sunday at darkening, and furtively shipped into her the articles stored in the vessel. All was ready for a start, but at the last moment five of the Englishmen refused to go. They were not ready to stand to what they had sworn over a glass of spirits, and Choyce hurried away with the remaining fifteen, fearful lest others of the company might desert at the last moment. It was the 10th of August, 1800.

Hoisting their sail, they were soon well out at sea, and all were very merry. The boat was christened the *Lucky Escape*, and Choyce was elected commander. Next day, off Chancay, they resolutely boarded a brig carrying ten men. But the vessel was found to be of little use to the runaways, being a slow sailer. Moreover, boats were observed putting off from the shore, so Choyce and his mates left the brig and made off with all sail set.

After coasting along for some time they spied a string of mules with only four men in charge, and dashing to the shore the sailors left the boat with a few of their mates and made for the mule-drivers. The animals were urged to their full speed, but one lagged behind and was captured. To the disgust of the sailors the burden was found to consist only of salt. The drivers, Spaniards, and well mounted, now began to retaliate, flinging their lassoes among the Englishmen. The danger was great; had a loop encircled any one of them, the unfortunate man would have been dragged by the mule at full gallop to his death, torn to pieces along the rough ground. The only thing was to have ready their knives with which instantly to cut the lasso if it caught.

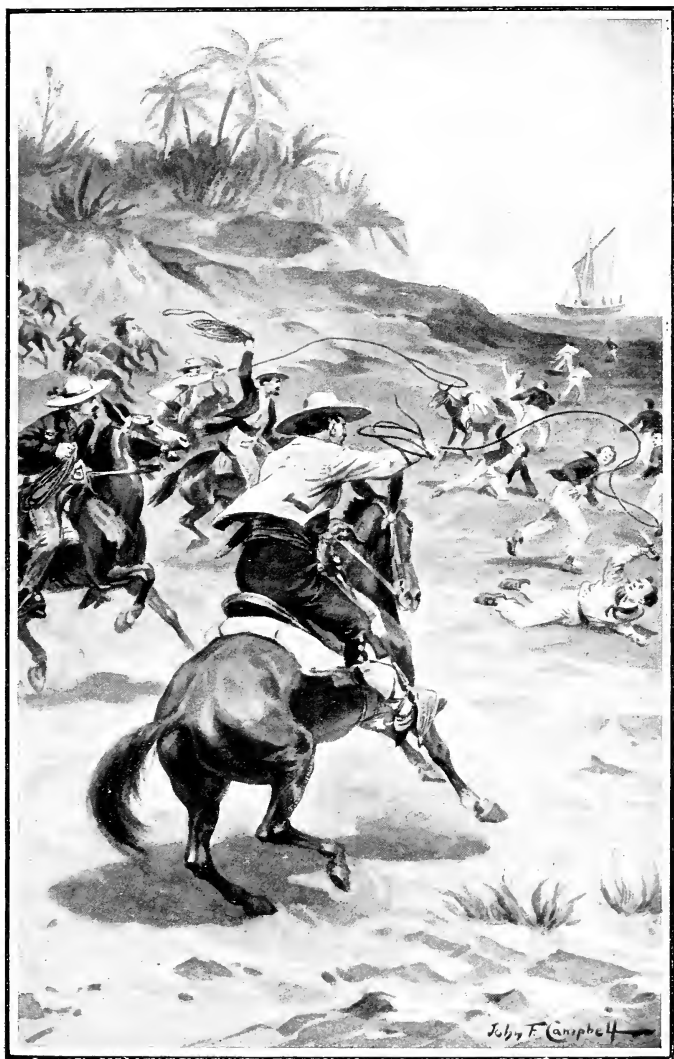
For half an hour this curious fight went on, the

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Englishmen dodging the lassoes, throwing themselves frequently to the ground to do so, all the while making for the boat. The Spaniards on their mules pursued, jeering at and execrating the sailors to their hearts' content. Choyce was glad to get every man of his party safe on board the boat again, and to make off, even without the booty he had reckoned on.

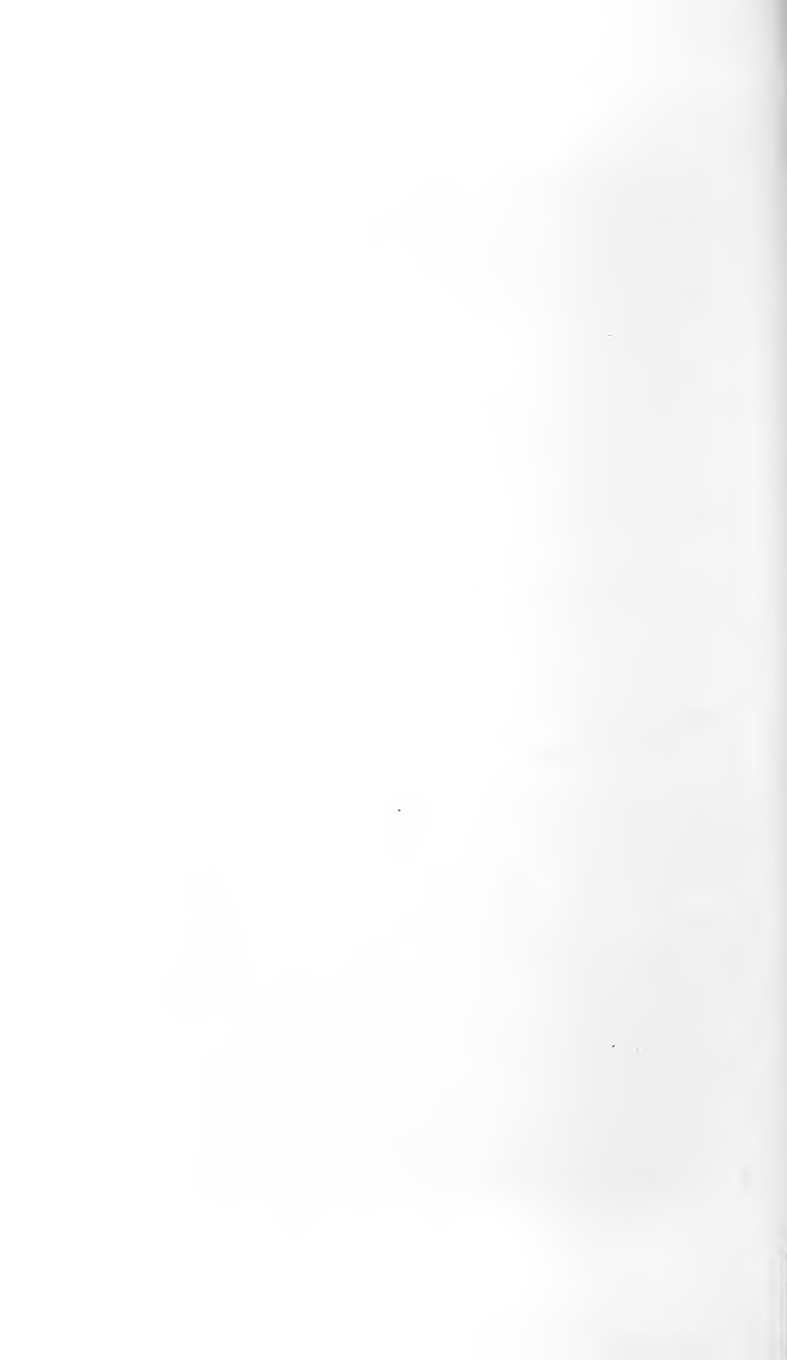
Some days later, off Gran Chaco, the Englishmen perceived a brig at anchor in the roads, and at once determined to make an effort to secure her. They took down mast and sail, and in the dusk crept up to the vessel, intending at midnight to board her. The weapons available for this purpose were certainly not of any great account; they consisted of thick sticks only, except in the case of the skipper himself. He had a small dirk, and by tying this to the end of a stick he made a serviceable spear. The Spaniards, after their usual fashion, were sleeping on deck, and knew nothing till the attackers began to swarm on board. As it happened, the crew of the brig were likewise without weapons for the most part, save billets of wood.

A lively scene followed. Bit by bit the Spaniards were forced back under the poop, some of them fleeing to the cabin. The rest of the fellows Choyce and his mates drove under hatches. Presently some of the men in the cabin were found to be dropping through the windows and swimming to the ship's boat fastened astern. Before they could be stopped they had cut the rope and made off. Choyce did not greatly trouble himself about these few, knowing well that they could not land till morning light. The victors now began to see to the wounded, three of whom had been badly hurt by the improvised spear. It was just as well, Choyce thought, that his



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Choyce and his companions attacked the muleteers, but found that the mules were carrying not water but salt. The Spaniards retaliated by trying to lasso the sailors, who had to use their knives, and even throw themselves on the ground to avoid the fatal loop.



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comrades had had no weapon of the kind, or there would have been none of the brig's crew left alive.

The Englishmen lost no time in putting the prisoners—for such the crew were—into the vessel's long-boat, with a supply of water and provisions. Nineteen Spaniards were sent adrift in this boat, and six others had escaped in the smaller craft. The captain, the mate, and the supercargo happened to be on shore at the time. Here, therefore, was Choyce, with his small boat and his handful of men, in full possession of a barque carrying a crew of not far short of thirty. The vessel was the *San Pedro*, her chief cargo consisting of spirits (*aguardiente*) and wine, an unfortunate thing, as it turned out later on.

Choyce was again chosen captain; indeed, he was the only one of the English sailors who had any knowledge of navigation. He had no charts, no instruments, no tables, but he set a course to the best of his ability for the Galapagos Islands, as he had done on other occasions when he had attempted escape. The superabundance of ardent spirits, however, soon began to tell. The men grew idle, fractious, insubordinate, and finally quarrelsome, and the skipper had a heavy time of it. Worse and worse became the intoxication among the greater portion of the crew, while, on the other hand, to the alarm of all, the water supply was fast giving out. When Choyce proposed to restrict the daily allowance per man, the sailors became mutinous, and, before long, threatening.

The young captain assured his men that with reasonable good luck they ought to make Galapagos in three days. But that time passed over, and still no glimpse of land appeared. It began to be probable that they had missed the group of islands altogether, a thing not at all un-

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likely, when the men at the helm were generally too drunk to know clearly what they were doing. Sometimes a man would be found to be steering at one time due north and a few minutes later due west, the steersman quite unaware that he had deviated from the course set. The skipper was in a great rage and rated the fellows soundly, saying that but for the wretched steering the brig would already have reached her destination. The only effect was to bring down on Choyce the threat, evidently seriously uttered, that if in three days more land was not sighted, the captain would be flung overboard. Choyce's thoughts went back to Columbus, whose men, on the first voyage to the West Indies, had made use of a similar threat to him. And Choyce put before his men much the same sort of argument that the great navigator had done. To throw the skipper overboard, he urged, would be to lose the only man at all capable of navigating the ship, and the step certainly would not bring fresh water for the parched crew. The fellows saw the reasonableness of the master's argument, and for the future behaved a little better.

Nevertheless, it was with some trepidation that the captain saw the third day come and go without bringing the least sight of land. Another day wore away, and yet another, and matters were beginning to look bad again. However, Choyce fancied, on the evening of the fifth day, that land was not far off, and he sat up all night to watch for it. "As my fear had been great," he tells us, "so great was my satisfaction when, on the 29th of August, about four in the morning, I spied land to the north-west, and communicated the joyful news to my companions by shouting out as loud as I could holloa, 'Land ho! land ho!' They were mostly sleep-

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ing on the quarter-deck, and soon joined me to feast their eyes on the joyful sight." The land proved to be Chatham Island, one of the Galapagos group.

Thus the adventurous London Jack-tar, after six manful but unsuccessful previous attempts to escape from the enemy's hands, on the seventh met with the reward due to his pluck, his resourcefulness, and his dogged perseverance.

From *The Log of a Jack-tar*, by Commander Cameron. London, T. Fisher Unwin. By kind permission of the publisher.

CHAPTER XVI

CROSSING THE LINE

Crossing the line in former days—On board an East Indiaman, in 1814—Nearing the Equator—A visit from the representative of the sailors—Three “razors”—An obstinate steerage passenger—Neptune and his car—Amphitrite and the Tritons—The ship’s doctor the first victim—The cabin passenger called up—“I paid for No. 1”—Not to be drawn—Retaliation—Chased and soused—The steerage passenger—Strikes out—A rush for the captain’s cabin—Skipper interferes—A recalcitrant victim—A well-wielded trident—Ducked in the sea—Almost drowned—Broken heads—The vigorous resister comes off triumphant.

THE ceremonies observed by sailors in former days in the case of those who crossed the Equator for the first time would seem to have varied from the mildest of practical joking to the roughest of horse-play and even the infliction of indignities and serious injury. The experiences of one gentleman, a passenger to India, are graphically related by himself, and his account may be taken as entirely trustworthy, though he withholds his own name and that of the ship.

It was in the spring of 1814 that this gentleman left Portsmouth, in an East Indiaman of a thousand tons burden. There were eighteen passengers in all, he the youngest of them. One of the cabin passengers was a fat old general, on whom many practical jokes were played, from the very beginning of the voyage. One day some lively fellow or other smeared the inside of the old

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gentleman's hat-crown with tar, and the unsuspecting veteran presently put it on. Soon, to the intense amusement of the company, the tar began to trickle down his cheeks. The general, thinking that it was merely perspiration that was running down, frequently mopped his face with his handkerchief, and, strange to say, without discovering the trick, at least for a considerable time.

Leaving these matters, however, we may pass on to the time when the East Indiaman was nearing the line. A whisper went round among the passengers that on the present occasion the sailors meant to perform all the ancient rites and usages in the completest manner. Later in the day this rumour was found to be fully justified. Our narrator, the youngest of the passengers, in common with the rest, received a visit from one of the crew, a big burly fellow already half drunk. The man pulled out three implements he called razors, really pieces of iron of varying degrees of roughness and jaggedness, and inquired with which of these the gentleman preferred to be shaved. The victim looked doubtfully at the tools: the first was like a coarse saw; the next was not quite so rough; and the last was a comparatively innocent implement.

"Since you are so polite as to offer me a choice," was the reply, "I should prefer the instrument with the smoothest edge."

The sailor intimated that such a privilege and honour could only be bought at a high figure, whereupon the passenger handed him a guinea. To the young man's chagrin he was informed that that was the price of number two razor only. Said the sailor, "I never apply number three to the chin of a mortal for less than two guineas and a pint of rum."

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The two guineas and a bottle of brandy were accordingly given, and the passenger congratulated himself that he would thus get off easily. He did not know what was in store for him.

The Jack-tar, in the course of his round, came to another young fellow, a steerage passenger, but this man asserted that he had crossed the line before, and was therefore exempt from the customary penalties. The sailor flatly refused to believe this, and angrily demanded money, a demand the young man as angrily refused to meet. The seaman finally left, vowing vengeance on the luckless passenger, and swearing that he should be shaved with number one, the saw-like instrument. Thus the round of the ship was made, and a list of victims drawn up, the only exemptions allowed being in the few cases where the captain could certify that the person in question had really crossed the line before.

The ship was now close to the equinoctial line, and the passengers were at once ordered, in the rudest fashion, to go below, where they were confined under hatches with a rough seaman to keep guard over them. The skipper had evidently given up control of his ship for the time being, so peremptory were the orders of the tars. It was plain, too, that no very pleasant experiences were in store for the candidates for Neptune's rites. Some of the party tried to laugh off the whole thing as a joke, but others were becoming uneasy, to say the least of it. All had taken care to don the oldest garments they could command. While the victims were thus penned under hatches, great preparations were being made on deck, as the din and bustle overhead abundantly told.

Noon arrived, and with it the Equator, as it happened, a fact announced by the blowing of a long tin horn from

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the forecastle. Then Neptune himself was drawn forward on a gun-carriage. The dread ruler of the sea was a big strapping fellow standing fully six feet three without his boots, who on ordinary days acted as ship's armourer or blacksmith. He was already pretty well primed with grog, but bore himself with some dignity. He carried a trident of iron which he had himself forged. Neptune's car was a water-butt, and it was drawn by eight Tritons, otherwise Jack-tars. His queen, Amphitrite, was represented by a short, thick-set sailor. As for Neptune himself, "the upper part of his body was naked, and painted a nondescript colour, between blue and green; several long strips of horse-hair hanging over his shoulders and sweeping the edges of his triumphal car. His face was so bedaubed with paint that not a feature could be distinguished. His right hand held the trident; his left was stuffed most majestically into his breeches' pocket." The Tritons were truly fearful monsters, and all so tipsy that they could scarce keep their feet at all. Amphitrite stood by the side of her lord, "with a pipe in her mouth, from which she propelled volumes of smoke." The barber stood by, his razors and a huge brush on a broomstick ready.

Before these imposing royalties the skipper prostrated himself with a profound reverence, and desired to know the king's wishes. His majesty claimed full sway over the ship and all in her, the vessel being now in the very centre of his dominions. The passengers, who had been allowed on deck to see the sight, were now driven below again, and the ceremonies began.

The first "candidate" was summoned, and though some of the rest affected to laugh, there was a perceptible quivering among the unfortunates. It was the surgeon

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who was thus early called upon, and he was blindfolded and roughly dragged on deck, the Tritons jeering at him and making coarse jests at his expense. What happened to the doctor above the others could not tell, and a time of suspense followed for them. They were anything but cheered by the banter of the fellow who acted as gaoler. He gloated over the prospective sufferings of the party, sufferings he described in language too graphic to be pleasant.

It was not till the fifth call that the turn came of our young cabin passenger, the narrator of the story. He tried to assume an air of indifference, and even to laugh, but all the time he could distinctly hear every beat of his heart, so loud and violent were the pulsations. His eyes had been bandaged, but not very closely, and he was able to see fairly well what was going on. An immense water-tub, with a plank laid across it, stood on the deck, and on this the victim had to sit. The barber, by this time almost too tipsy to act at all, was going to use the roughest of the razors, the terrible number one, but the gentleman at once reminded him that he had paid for the luxury of being shaved with number three.

"You say true, my lad," hiccupped the barber; "I took you for the land-jack who pretended that he had crossed the line, and refused to pay the toll. When it comes to his turn, won't I harrow his face to a pretty tune!"

The barber took up his brush and dipped it into the "lather," a horrible mixture of tar, grease, and more nauseous things still. He held the well-filled brush just in front of the novice's mouth, and then asked him his opinion on the barber thus far. Our narrator was not to be drawn, and kept his mouth firmly shut. He well knew that the instant he had opened it, the brush with its vile

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compound would have been thrust into it, and that to the intense merriment of the drunken sailors around. A second question followed, but elicited no more reply than the first had. The victim began to think he had played the part of passive resister quite long enough.

Suddenly, while the barber was staggering and almost falling prone on the deck, the gentleman sprang up and gave the man a push. While the sailor fell with a lurch flat on his back the passenger made a bolt. His spirited move availed him nothing; instantly he was seized by one of the Tritons and flung headlong into the tub. The water in it was frightfully foul, but he was hardly allowed to push even his head above the surface for breath. The moment the unlucky man rose he was ruthlessly forced under again, till he was all but suffocated.

How much longer this treatment might have been continued it would have been hard to say; but by this time the barber had regained his feet, and in a mighty rage declared that he had been defrauded of his privilege by this recalcitrant passenger. He vowed he meant to have satisfaction. Things began to look bad for the young gentleman. But at this point the officer of the watch interfered, and, after much squabbling, the shaving part of the business was omitted, much to the disgust of the grumbling and furious barber. A severe ducking was substituted, and at last this candidate was suffered to go. As he turned away the captain threw a pailful of seawater over him, an affront he was at first inclined to resent. But as it cleansed him considerably, the passenger grew grateful for this final sousing. He moved only a yard or two away, and sat on the poop to watch the remainder of the proceedings, glad enough to have saved his face "from certain excoriation."

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Victim after victim was brought up, and much the same sort of thing was witnessed each time, except that for a while none of them showed any resistance as our hero had done, but submitted to whatever the tipsy and brutal tars thought fit to inflict. The sight of it all began to disgust the spectator on the poop.

The turn came now of the steerage passenger who had refused to pay blackmail to the sailors, and our narrator fully expected a scene when that individual was called up. The expected for once did not fail to happen. The young fellow was dragged to the spot in the roughest possible way, but, strange to say, he bore it all quietly. As in the case of the others he was made to sit on the plank across the water-tub, and, as before, the barber held the brush before his mouth while the stock question was asked. As soon as the victim's lips were parted to speak, the brush was thrust between them, causing uproarious laughter among the men. It was clear that they meant to bait this customer long and severely. The barber now proceeded to spread the lather, and covered the man's face, to his very eyes, with the loathsome mess. They evidently looked on the young man as wanting in both wit and spirit, and were prepared to go all lengths with him. The victim still sat quietly, offering no resistance.

Now the operator took up razor number one, with its huge gaps showing conspicuously, and with a great sweep drew it across the man's cheek and chin. The effect was serious indeed, and the cabin passenger looking on from the poop saw the blood flowing in streams from the ugly gashes. The torture must have been excruciating to the poor fellow. But the game had gone too far, and a change came in the programme as sudden as it was decided.

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"The lad suddenly slid from his plank, tore the bandage from his eyes, and, striking the barber on the forehead with his whole force, laid him flat upon the deck. He was immediately surrounded, but, seizing the trident from the grasp of Neptune, who was so stupefied from intoxication that he could scarcely hold it, the ill-used youth wielded it with such lusty energy that he laid several of those who attempted to capture him beside their prostrate companion the shaver." This plucky and vigorous attack on the part of the young man from the steerage must have been truly refreshing to our narrator sitting not far away; and the sufferer had not finished yet. With his trident he speedily cleared a way through the crowd of sailors, some of them falling hastily back to avoid the lusty blows that laid others of the band prostrate. He had soon made good his passage as far as "the cuddy door, which, it being locked on the inside, he burst open with a stroke of his hand, and, proceeding to the captain's cabin, demanded admittance. This door was likewise locked, but with one blow of his foot he made a clear passage, and stood before the captain with his face begrimed and bleeding." He proceeded to vent his indignation on the skipper in no measured terms. "I hold you responsible," he said; "I have been insulted and ill-used by your men, and I here demand reparation from you for this injury!"

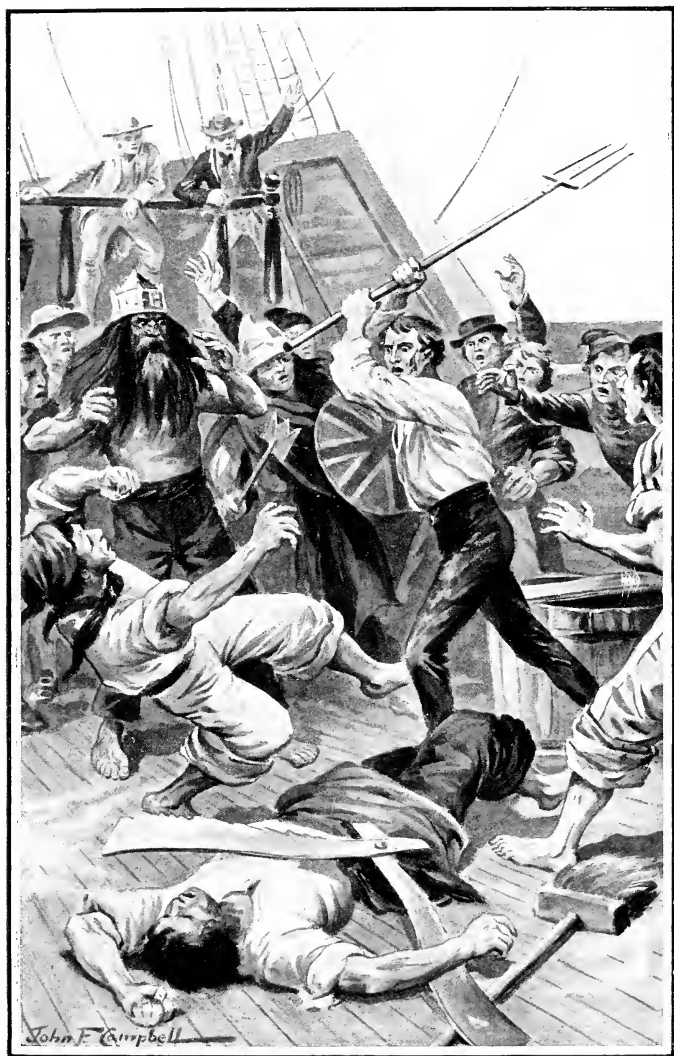
The captain was by this time no little frightened, and offered the young man a thousand apologies. He declared he had never intended that things should go to the length the sailors had carried them. Then he rushed on deck and loudly demanded that the young man should be ill-treated no more. The sailors growled a good deal, but submitted, and the steerage passenger, triumphant to that extent, retired to wash himself and to plaster up his

CROSSING THE LINE

bleeding gashes. Had this sturdy young fellow been the first, or one of the first, to be operated upon, it is more than probable that the after proceedings would have suffered considerable modification.

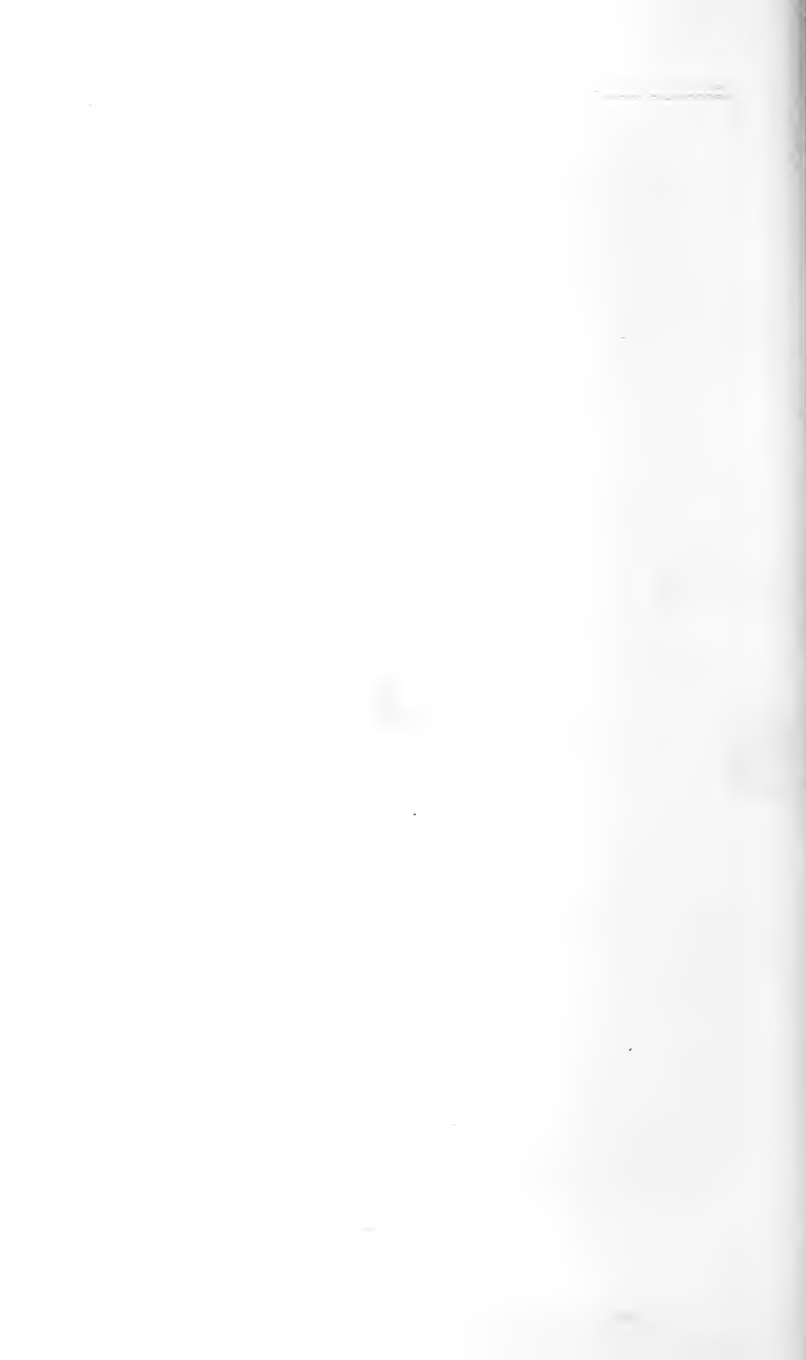
There remained some of the crew to be dealt with, however, such men, that is, as were now crossing the Equator for the first time. The skipper left his drunken company to their own devices, with the result that still rougher usage was inflicted on the unlucky tars. All were stripped to the waist, and the lather was compounded of still more offensive ingredients. Man after man came away with tears streaming down his face from the agony he was enduring. Yet for a time no resistance was made by any victim. It would have been a marvel, however, had no man of them all showed fight, and presently there came a fellow of the right stamp. He was a finely-built and athletic seaman, and he flatly refused to go through the performance. He soon made things lively.

He began by upsetting Neptune and his car without ceremony ; then, striking out vigorously with his fists, he floored several of the Tritons, and got clean away. Neptune's immediate retainers and attendants were, in truth, too drunk to stop this active and determined young fellow. But the crew generally were not disposed to let him off thus easily, and the more sober among them gave chase. Escape within the narrow confines of a ship was impossible, and the man was presently caught. He fought like a tiger, but was overpowered at last, and hauled on deck again. A rope was put round his waist, and he was pulled up to the yard-arm ; thence he was dropped into the sea, no effort being made to hoist him up again. It seemed as if the affair were about to end in



CATCHING A TARTAR

A steerage passenger, instead of submitting to the rites, seized Neptune's trident and soon cleared a way for himself to the captain's cabin.



CROSSING THE LINE

sheer murder. In the nick of time the skipper and his officers, forced to intervene, rushed to the spot, and ordered the fellows to draw up the poor victim of their ill-usage. The crew were vastly disposed to rebel, but gave way, and the man was hoisted on board and laid on the deck unconscious and almost dead.

This might have been thought to be the end of the fray, but that was by no means the case; the victim had still to be reckoned with. He was removed below, and after a space came round. His recovery brought an immediate renewal of the sensation for the crew, and furnished what must have been an amusing and a highly gratifying scene for the passengers. Certainly our narrator enjoyed the spectacle, and was delighted when the brutality was repaid with interest, and when the avenger of his own and others' wrongs scored so splendidly.

"No sooner had he recovered from the effects of his cruel bath than he made his appearance among his drunken companions, and, tearing off the swabs from Neptune's and the barber's brows, he seized each by the hair and dashed their heads together with such violence that they both fell speechless upon the quarter-deck. He then belaboured the drunken Tritons with such earnestness that several fell prostrate beneath the might of his muscular arm. This created a general tumult, which was not allayed before more than one broken head had been committed to the charge of the surgeon. The champion in this affray finally retired without a scratch, for he had fortunately escaped the infliction of the razor."

The "crossing the line ceremonies" came to an abrupt and decisive termination after this, as may well be believed. The remaining "candidates" escaped entirely

CROSSING THE LINE

through the prowess of the athletic sailor, for the skipper, alarmed at the length to which matters had gone, effectively interfered, to put a stop to the proceedings. It was not before time.

Needless to repeat, these grotesque performances have in our times become less formidable, if still sometimes amusing, affairs than they were wont to be in the days of the old East Indiamen.

CHAPTER XVII

A SHIP ON FIRE

The *Amazon* on her first voyage—Heated bearings—An ominous misfortune—"Fire!" in the middle of the night—Rush on deck—Engines cannot be stopped—Hose and pumps destroyed—"To the boats!"—Terrible disaster in the launching—Third and fourth attempts—Mother and child cling to the thwarts—Boat launched at last—Lifeboat safely off—She picks up five men from the dingy—The end of the *Amazon*—Sufferings of those in the boats—A brutal captain—One boat-load picked up and carried to Plymouth—Another to Brest—A third boat found next day—A fourth batch of survivors landed a fortnight later—The loss of life—Wreck of the *Amazon* a memorable one—Heroism of the ship's officers.

FEW disasters at sea can be more appalling than the burning to destruction of a fine ship crowded with human beings. Certainly the imagination can conceive nothing more terrible, and the accounts of such would generally, in their intensity of horror, be too shocking to read were it not that often—nay, almost always—the dreadful story shows some striking example of heroism and sinking of self, shows humanity at its best and noblest, in fact. The number of ships burnt at sea, even during the past century, to go no farther back, is unfortunately too great to be counted. But some of these disasters will long live in the memory of men. Such are the destruction of the *Kent*, the *Austria*, the *Ocean Monarch*, and the *Amazon*. The story of the loss of these is in every case a thrilling one—thrilling for its

A SHIP ON FIRE

awful horrors, and thrilling for its examples of sublime heroism and almost superhuman effort. We may select that of the *Amazon*.

This was a fine timber-built ship, the largest of its kind that had up to that time ever been turned out of our English shipyards. She was on her first voyage, a voyage destined to be also her last. The *Amazon* was finished in what elderly folk still call "the Exhibition Year," that is, 1851, but it was not till January 2nd, 1852, that she left Southampton on her first voyage to the West Indies. The vessel was a very large one, according to the notions of those days, her length fully 300 feet. She was a costly ship, and magnificently fitted up. Great expectations were formed respecting this fine vessel. She carried 161 persons in all, of whom about a third were passengers. Captain Symonds, her commander, was a splendid fellow, as subsequent events abundantly showed, and this was also the case with many of his subordinate officers. It is worth noting that one of the passengers was Mr. Warburton, the world-famous author of *The Crescent and the Cross*. Another was a Mr. Neilson, a man as gallant as he was helpful and skilled in his profession of engineer.

The ship had a hearty send-off from the crowds gathered to see her start, and as for the passengers, they were delighted that they had been able to secure places in so fine a steamer. But their self-congratulations were damped when, only a few miles out, she suddenly stopped, and the rumour ran round that it was because the bearings of the engines had become too hot. Too hot! and but a very minute fraction of the long voyage as yet accomplished, and even that under easy steaming! The captain explained that in the case of new machinery

A SHIP ON FIRE

there was commonly a little overheating of the bearings at first, but that presently all would go well. This removed the uneasiness the majority of the passengers felt, but it did not satisfy the engineer passenger, Mr. Neilson. And Mr. Warburton, a most experienced traveller, regarded the circumstance as ominous. However, after a stop of an hour or two for the machinery to cool down, a fresh start was made.

Next day passengers and crew alike had much to talk about. More than once the huge engines had to be stopped, the heating having reached a pitch too dangerous to be allowed to continue.

"Are we in danger?" was the one question now; it was asked in whispers from one end of the ship to the other.

"Do you think the ship is safe? Will a fire break out?" the frightened passengers, following up their questionings, inquired of the responsible officers, in tones of alarm.

The captain and his subordinates did their best to reassure and to cheer the poor creatures, though Captain Symonds himself was trying to inspire a hope and a confidence he by no means felt himself. He was unwilling to return to port, and not unnaturally so, with that fine and splendidly-equipped vessel, though the passengers almost all besought him to do so. Had he put back, there might have been a very different tale to tell. Yet who knows? It might simply have been the English Channel instead of the Bay of Biscay that would have seen the fearful catastrophe that presently befell the *Amazon*.

Captain Symonds kept his vessel moving slowly, whenever the state of the bearings admitted of it, carrying the

A SHIP ON FIRE

craft and the souls on board of her farther from home and from land, and farther into the restless Bay of Biscay. The passengers for the most part went to bed, many of them with sad forebodings, and almost all too full of fears to sleep. Mr. Neilson knew too much about the dangers to be apprehended to go comfortably to his berth, and he remained till late in the engine-room talking to the chief engineer. The machinery was very hot again, and a stoppage was made, water being pumped on the bearings to cool them. But at length, about midnight, things seeming in a better state, the captain and Mr. Neilson retired to their respective berths. For nearly an hour longer the *Amazon* churned her way across the heaving and tossing Bay.

Suddenly there rang out in the darkness of the night the blood-curdling cry of "Fire! Fire!" Two different men of the crew, almost at the same moment, had peeped into the engine-room. To their consternation and horror, they had found the place full of leaping flames. Not a second was lost. While some made an attempt, gallant but ineffectual, to stop the engines, others seized buckets and attempted to bring the pumps to bear on the fire. The fire-bell was loudly rung, terrifying everybody with its awful peal. Up on deck came crowds of sailors and frantic passengers, most of the latter clad only in their night garments. The shrieks of the people, the din of the alarm-bell, the roar of the flames, the blustering of the winds, and the cries of a number of animals that were on board were enough to appal the stoutest heart there. And all this time the vessel was tearing at a great rate through the heaving billows and the blackness of the night.

In all the records of destruction by fire at sea, few, if

A SHIP ON FIRE

any, equal the burning of the *Amazon* in this respect—the rapidity with which the flames spread and obtained the mastery. Within a very few minutes, indeed, the whole of the middle part of the vessel was blazing fiercely, the flames towering on high, and quite cutting off the fore from the after portion. The effect of this was that the officers and the passengers were almost altogether separated from the crew. Nor was this all; the engineers, after a short but heroic fight with the fierce flames, were compelled to abandon the engine-room, the monster machinery still in full play. Then, to the dismay of the men, to get out the hose and bring the steam pumps to bear on the fire was likewise found to be impossible, both hose and pumps having been consumed. Indeed, everything seemed to combine to bring about a catastrophe of the most disastrous kind. The extraordinary speed with which the flames travelled along the ship was not understood by the passengers, but it was no mystery to those in charge of the *Amazon*. The vessel carried a large quantity of oil, as well as tallow, hay, tarred sacks, and the like; moreover, her own timbers were of the most inflammable description. Much of the most combustible of the cargo was unfortunately quite near the engines, and the fire was upon it almost at once.

By this time the flames were shooting high in the air, and the doomed vessel, to any one who saw it from the neighbourhood, must have presented a spectacle awful yet grand. The very speed at which the ship was running helped on the work of destruction. Captain Symonds and his officers did everything in their power, working like slaves with the buckets, trying to comfort the affrighted crowds, conducting themselves like the heroes they were.

A SHIP ON FIRE

But after all, what could either officers or crew do at such a time and in the face of such an extraordinary combination of untoward circumstances? The flames were devouring everything before them; the engines could not be stopped; the pumps were burnt; to throw pails of water on such an enormous mass of conflagration was absolutely useless. The captain after a time went to the helm, there being nothing else he could do. Meanwhile the second officer, Mr. Roberts, was endeavouring to keep something like order among the bewildered and even desperate groups that crowded around him while he superintended the launching of the boats.

Of these there were nine in all belonging to the *Amazon's* equipment, four of them life-boats. To launch these successfully was now the work to be done, a work that would at any time have been a difficulty in such a high wind and with so rough a sea. Now there were other and far greater difficulties. To begin with, the boats were chiefly in the after part of the ship, and consequently the crew could not get at them for the flames. But the skipper at the wheel altered his course, with the effect of throwing the flames in a different direction. Every boat was at once filled with people and waiting only the captain's orders to be lowered. Mr. Roberts performed good service in the struggle for places. Some who had secured a seat in a boat clamoured to be out again, becoming terrified by the roughness of the sea below. One man had seized a life-belt, but this the officer took from him, sternly reminding him that the ladies must be first provided for. One of the boats had by this caught fire, and it was time the order was given to lower.

Then came a series of mishaps as extraordinary in their

A SHIP ON FIRE

similarity and number as they were melancholy in result. The very first of the life-boats was swamped almost before she had touched the water, something having gone wrong with the lowering tackle, and a score of poor creatures were thrown headlong into the waves, amidst shrieks of horror from both victims and spectators. It was a heart-breaking scene, and only two of the unfortunates were picked up, the rest being drowned before the eyes of their companions still on deck. The second life-boat was now lowered; it had dropped but a little way, when one end of the craft became unhooked from the tackle in some inexplicable manner, and another batch of passengers were flung into the dark and agitated waters. The third boat met with no better fate, the tackle becoming unhooked, strange to say, at the other end of the boat. Its occupants were in their turn shot into the sea, the boat swinging empty by one end. Thus three boat-loads had been flung helplessly to their destruction. Yet all the while captain and officers were doing their best for the safety of the rest, working like Trojans in keeping order, seeing to the passengers and to the lowering operations. It was a truly melancholy run of ill-luck. And all the while the flames were roaring ever louder and shooting up to a greater height. It was a marvel that any others of the unhappy creatures should have had courage enough to try their fortune in another small boat, after the awful examples they had had before their eyes in the launching of the first three. But, then, to remain in the ship meant death, and death in its most fearful form, whereas by adventuring themselves on the waters the poor folk might have a bare chance of escape.

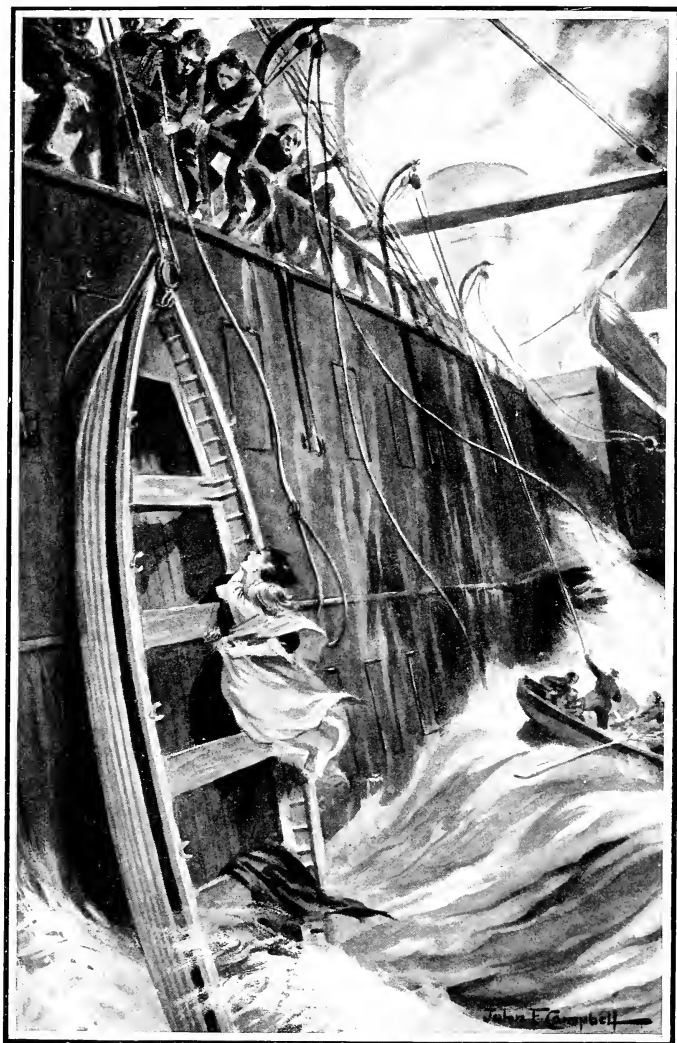
And now a little heart was put into the despairing

A SHIP ON FIRE

creatures by the successful launching of the fourth of the life-boats. Fifteen persons, including Mr. Neilson the engineer passenger, pushed clear of the ship, she tearing the while through the tossing waves, and illuminating sea and sky by her leaping and devouring flames.

The ship's surgeon shortly afterwards played a conspicuous part in the launching of the pinnace. Among the terrified passengers still on the deck of the *Amazon* were a lady and her little daughter, the lady's husband having already succumbed to the effects of the terrific heat. The doctor seized the weeping child and placed her in the pinnace and then helped in the distracted mother, who was with great difficulty held back from rushing to destruction by the side of her husband. Another hitch with the tackle threw yet another boat-load of shrieking mortals into the sea, and, as in other cases, the boat was left swaying backwards and forwards hanging from one end. An awful cry arose from the agonised onlookers, and then it was seen that some one was clinging to the thwarts for dear life. By the help of the doctor and others this person was hauled back to the deck of the ship. It proved to be the mother, who with heroic strength held her child still in her arms. It is pleasing to relate that this brave woman was one of the few who were finally saved, and that she carried her little girl with her to land.

To attempt to describe the scene on board at this point would be to attempt the impossible, and besides, the account, if it could be fully and adequately given, would harrow the feelings of the reader to an extent well-nigh unbearable. Many of the poor victims, or who would soon be numbered among the victims, had become demented, either with the agonies they were already



A PLUCKY MOTHER

A hitch with the tackle threw another boat-load of human beings into the water, except one woman who desperately clung to the thwarts with one arm, and grasped her child with the other.



A SHIP ON FIRE

enduring, or with the thought of the fate that must inevitably be theirs, and that within a space of time possibly to be reckoned by minutes only. Some lay writhing on the deck, their burnt skin and flesh tearing off in patches; ladies, with nothing on save their night-clothing, flew hither and thither distracted; some in the madness of despair actually leapt headlong into the seething fires, as a quick end to all their sufferings of mind and body. A few sprang overboard, carrying in their arms a chair or some other article that might help to keep them afloat. Here and there might be seen a person engaged in earnest prayer, and more composed, the air all the while filled with the uproar of the winds, the sea, the flames, mingled with the shrieks of the doomed wretches.

There were several smaller boats left on the *Amazon*, but it was out of the question to attempt to launch any of these till the speed of the vessel abated. Fortunately this much-to-be-desired result now came; the engines began to slow down; soon they would cease to throb altogether. How many of the craft were successfully launched cannot now be known; the accounts of what passed on board after this are necessarily but vague. It is time to turn away from the ship herself and her perishing occupants, to the boats that had cleared the wreck and disappeared in the darkness.

One of these, it will be remembered, was the life-boat containing Mr. Neilson. While this was cruising about in the neighbourhood, a small skiff with five men in her, one of them a middy, and a splendid youngster, hove in sight. The little boat was filling rapidly, and the men were fighting the incoming water, baling with a couple of shoes, the only vessels available. These poor fellows were speedily transferred from their dingy to the life-boat,

A SHIP ON FIRE

the smaller craft being taken in tow. The crew determined to stand by to see the end of the *Amazon*, an end that was plainly at hand, to watch if haply they might pick up some struggling creature.

So at a little distance Mr. Neilson and his companions remained, the waves for a long distance reddened with the same glare that illuminated the otherwise ghastly faces of the shivering and horror-stricken spectators. The storm had grown worse, and the bitter January winds whistled over the bosom of the sea, fanning the flames as the *Amazon* tossed hither and thither unguided. It was towards morning when the end came for the fine vessel. First one mast fell over, then another, and at last two or three tremendous explosions rent the air with their horrid din. Then the *Amazon* at once turned turtle, and the next minute the flames and the wreck that had fed them disappeared for ever. The last sight the on-lookers had of the ship showed her to be one huge, seething, roaring cauldron; the next instant left the sea in pitchy darkness, the darkness that precedes the first streaks of the coming dawn.

The survivors in the life-boat pulled about the spot, but saw not a sign of life, though of wreckage the sea was full. There was nothing for it but to turn sadly and heart-broken away, and endeavour to reach land, or at least some passing vessel that might render help. One such ship had actually passed already, while the *Amazon* was still burning, but the brutal captain and his crew, turning a deaf ear to the frantic cries of the life-boat company, had gone on her way, leaving the poor wretches to whatever fate might await them. In the middle of the morning—it was Sunday—to their indescribable joy they were picked up by an outward-bound vessel, whose

A SHIP ON FIRE

skipper, full of sympathy, at once put back to Plymouth, where the sufferers were safely landed, the first to bring to England the terrible news.

We may glance next at the pinnacle, in which were, amongst others, the lady and her little daughter, who had so pluckily clung to the thwarts while the boat had hung perpendicularly in the air. The occupants of the pinnacle suffered long and terribly, and not least from exposure to the cold and wet, many of them having on hardly any clothing. The boat sprang a leak, and, but for the resourcefulness of one of the crew, would have been speedily swamped. He popped one of his garments over the gaping hole, and then sat on it to keep out as much of the water as possible. His device succeeded so well that his companions by baling were enabled to keep the craft afloat. The only chance of rescue for the miserable occupants lay in the possibility that some ship would pass that way. One or two vessels, indeed, were seen, but they were at too great a distance, and, to the dismay of the wrecked, they sailed away without having noticed the boat.

At last hope rose higher in their breasts. The short winter day was running rapidly out when another ship was observed, and at once the survivors from the *Amazon* put forth every effort to reach her. Should the darkness first come, the case was hopeless. A struggle for life, gallant, but almost killing in its severity, followed. Would the people on the ship see them? And if they did, would they respond? A few minutes decided their fate. The vessel was seen to heave-to, and presently every soul had been lifted from the pinnacle on to the deck. It was a Dutch vessel, and her men vied with each other in their eagerness to minister to the handful of sufferers.

A SHIP ON FIRE

The skipper at once made for Brest, interrupting his own voyage for the purpose.

Early on Monday morning yet another of the *Amazon's* boats was picked up by the Dutchman. This boat contained eight persons. She had had a hard fight for it, and had, in fact, been twice swamped before she had been launched. Searchers in plenty were by this time scouring the Bay in the endeavour to assist any other craft that might be still afloat. But nothing was seen of more of the survivors of the *Amazon*, and the pitiful remnant was regarded as all that had been saved.

The surprises in connection with this luckless vessel continued to the end. A whole fortnight after the catastrophe the country was startled—and overjoyed—to learn that thirteen other survivors had been landed at Plymouth by a revenue cutter. These poor souls had been picked up by another Dutch barque, and eventually handed over to the cutter. The total number saved was now increased to fifty-nine, leaving a total of one hundred and two who had perished either by fire or water.

Few fires at sea have been more awful, and this fact, coupled with the splendid heroism of the captain and many another man—and the ladies must not be left out—will long render this memorable among British wrecks.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE *PRINCE* AND ITS LIEUTENANT

The *Prince*, a French East Indiaman—Fire discovered in the hold—Desperate efforts to smother the fire—Fire spreads rapidly—Soldiers drawn up on deck—Seven men get away in the yawl—Mishap to the long-boat—Men and women frantic—The chaplain gives all absolution—The *Prince* heels partly over—Danger from the cannon—Lieutenant de la Fond—Slips into the sea—Grasped by a drowning soldier—The lieutenant's unselfishness—His terrible struggles—He tries to help and encourage on all sides—Mainmast falls and crushes many—Guns still discharging and killing—The ship explodes—All lost save those in the yawl—A marvellous voyage across the Atlantic—They reach Brazil—Well treated by the Portuguese—Return to France.

WHEN a ship is destroyed by fire at sea usually there are two, and only two, kinds of danger threatening the souls on board—the danger from the fire itself and that which awaits them if they take to the waters to avoid so fearful a death. But occasionally even other horrors are added. This was the case when the French East Indiaman *Le Prince* was burnt in the Atlantic, in the middle of the eighteenth century. The story of this vessel's destruction, of the conspicuous heroism of its first mate, and of the wonderful voyage of the handful of survivors, across almost the whole breadth of the Atlantic, in a small boat, is a remarkable one.

The *Prince* was unfortunate from her very start, for she ran aground soon after leaving the port L'Orient.

THE *PRINCE* AND ITS LIEUTENANT

But when at length she did get fairly away all went well till she was off the west coast of Africa, some five hundred miles south of the Equator. Suddenly one of the crew raised the dread alarm of fire, reporting to the first lieutenant, M. de la Fond, that smoke was coming up the main hatchway. The officer, to his alarm, found on investigating that there was fire raging below, and at once the terrifying news ran about the ship, instantly bringing up the captain from his dinner.

No time was lost. Immediately the hatchways were covered with patches of sail cloth that had been well steeped in the sea, in the hope that the fire would thus be smothered and no further damage done. Preparations were also made to flood the between-decks with water, but the fire increased so rapidly that this could not be done. The buckets were plied with all possible vigour, and, pipes being let down into the hold, the pumps were worked with a will. All in vain; in spite of the heroic exertions of the men the fire gained on them. As usual with East Indiamen in those days, the *Prince* carried a number of soldiers. These their officers at once paraded on deck to allay excitement, and to prevent so large a mass of men from creating confusion by their crowding. Their colonel was a fine fellow, and his coolness and fortitude at such a time were worthy of all admiration.

By this time it was clear to every man that the ship was doomed. Before long the flames were bursting forth from the main hatchway in great volumes. The fire was raging fiercely below, and when the master attempted to visit the hold he was immediately driven back by the fierceness of the heat. Had his men not thrown water over him he would have been consumed on the spot. The flames were now roaring, and mounting high, yet their din

THE *PRINCE* AND ITS LIEUTENANT

was quite drowned by the agonised shrieks of hundreds of human beings.

The boats were ordered out. One, the yawl, had already been launched, in fact, and four men had got into her and pushed off a little from the burning vessel. Three other sailors leapt overboard after their mates, carrying with them oars, with which the yawl was not as yet provided. The men still on board the *Prince* besought these seven to come back, but they, seeing the havoc the fire had already made, judged that it would be the better part to keep clear. The main thing was now to get out the long-boat, and at once the energies of the crew were devoted to the launching of the ponderous craft. Misfortune followed on the heels of misfortune. The boat happened to be slung high, and the fire attacked the ropes by which it was suspended. In a moment the tackle had burnt through and the long-boat fell with a crash upon the ship's guns, and bottom upwards. This was a terrible blow; to lift so heavy a craft and get her safely into the water was impossible; thus the chief means of rescue for the men lay useless. It was now evident that the greater number, if not all, of the ship's company must face death, the only question being whether it would be by fire or by drowning. Numbers of the poor wretches preferred to trust themselves to the waves, and sprang overboard in desperation.

The scene at this time is thus described by one narrator: "Yards, spars, hencoops, everything on which there was a hope of floating, were flung overboard. Many leapt into the waves. Others swam to the fragments of the wreck which floated around. The shrouds and yards of the vessel were covered with hesitating men, who could not yet determine on their mode of perishing. A father

THE *PRINCE* AND ITS LIEUTENANT

folded his son in his arms, and then throwing him into the sea, followed him, and both perished." There was a chaplain on board, and he, in pursuance of his duty at such a moment, stood on the quarter-deck to give absolution to those who were still on the vessel. Then, not content with that, the good man clambered to a part of the ship from which he could command a sight of those struggling in the waves, and again pronounced the formula of absolution.

Within a very few minutes the *Prince* heeled over on her side, and half her deck was submerged, leaving above water only a portion, almost the whole of which was fiercely blazing. From stem to stern there was hardly a place where a man might stand in safety, even for a few moments. M. de la Fond, the first mate, who had all along made the most heroic efforts to save life and to manage the ship, now taking a look around him, was startled to find that he was apparently the sole creature left alive on the vessel. But on his way to the round-house he met another man, the commander of the soldiers, a brave French gentleman.

"My friend and brother," cried Colonel de la Touche to the lieutenant, holding out his hand, "farewell!"

"Where are you going?" M. de la Fond inquired.

"To comfort my friend the captain," was the reply. And Captain Morin was found in the round-house endeavouring to cheer some ladies, his relatives, as well as a few other passengers there collected. All he and the other gentlemen could do for the poor creatures, however, was to advise them to seize something that would help them to float for a time, and with that to fling themselves into the sea when it was no longer possible to remain on the ship, a moment that was come very near;

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in fact, even as the group clung together in the round-house, the flames began to leap in through the window.

And now another awful danger threatened the miserable beings in the water around, a danger that had been foreseen by the gallant officers, but one it was out of their power to avert. The *Prince*, after the fashion of the time, was as much a warship as a merchantman, and carried a good many guns, all ready loaded, in case there should come an unexpected brush with the enemy. Enemies were plentiful at a time when nearly all Europe was engaged in war, and when France in particular was at variance with England and other countries. Suddenly there was a flash, thunder rent the air, and a chorus of resounding shrieks told with only too terrible clearness what had happened. One of the guns, subjected to the fierce heat of the flames, had gone off, its shot striking the crowd of struggling beings that hung desperately to the floating masts and yards. For more than one poor wretch suffering and suspense were brought to a sudden and awful end by the discharge. And this was but the first of the pieces of ordnance to come into action. There was a long row of others, any one of which might belch forth its fire and shot amongst the survivors, and none knew at what moment. Fire, sea, artillery—all leagued against these hopeless unfortunates! Few situations more dreadful than theirs can be imagined by the mind of man. Another and then another of the cannon boomed forth, each roar telling of the death of some, and increasing the apprehensions of the diminishing body of survivors.

When the flames had burst into the round-house the occupants had been forced out. Some flung themselves frantically into the sea. M. de la Fond, the lieutenant,

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threw off some of his clothing, and got astride of one of the yards, the end of which was drooping into the water. He thought to slide down the pole, but before he could do so it had become covered with human beings, and when he started he was thrown off, and fell into the sea. He was an expert swimmer, but he was instantly seized by a poor drowning wretch, a soldier, and had to dive beneath the surface to get rid of the man. The soldier held tight, however, and the lieutenant dived again. A third time De la Fond plunged below, yet could not get quite clear of the other. But the man was by this time almost drowned, and the lieutenant dived once more, this time coming up without the soldier, and at a distance from the spot where he was still feebly struggling. It was a severe fight the officer had had for his life. The experience he had just passed through had alarmed him a good deal, and he was very careful to keep away from everybody, avoiding even the dead bodies floating about, pushing them aside with one hand, to clear for himself a passage, while he swam with the other.

It is no wonder that by this time the man was quite exhausted. He could no longer keep himself on the surface without help, and he glanced round him in search of some support. He fortunately perceived a bit of a flagstaff with a loop of the cord still on it. To that he clung till he came near one of the yards. But noticing a man on the other end, and seeing that the yard was not more than enough to sustain the poor fellow, the lieutenant quitted his hold and left the spar to his comrade. In spite of his deplorable condition, M. de la Fond struck out for another and a larger yard he saw not far away; but this was filled with people, and he forbore to endanger them by putting his additional weight thereon.

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The hapless creatures, themselves in the most desperate plight, did not fail to appreciate the gallantry of the heroic and unselfish officer, and they expressed commiseration with him in his helpless situation.

With a great crash the mainmast now fell over, burnt through at the bottom. It struck a crowd of strugglers in the sea and killed several of them. But the next instant it was covered with people, who made for it as for an asylum of safety. The people on it were tossed hither and thither by the rolling waves, for the mast had become altogether detached from the ship. De la Fond likewise clung to this mast, and at once his mind turned to others who were not so fortunate. Seeing a couple of sailors precariously holding on to a hencoop, he encouraged them to endeavour to reach the mast, and this they did, bringing with them one or two others who had seized them by the way. The lieutenant seems to have thought of everybody rather than of himself. Among those holding on to the mast were two young ladies, and these he did his best to support and cheer. The chaplain was there also, giving a final absolution to his companions in misfortune. There were, the lieutenant estimated, some eighty persons on the mainmast.

Though they for the moment congratulated themselves that they had secured a place of comparative safety, yet in reality their position was one of extreme danger. All the time at intervals the cannon had been discharging their contents into the sea, often to the destruction of the poor souls floating around the ship. And now it was observed that some of the as yet undischarged guns were pointing in the very direction of the mass of beings on the mast. The situation was one of horror; at any moment death might come for them. But first one and

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then another poor wretch dropped from his hold, too exhausted to cling longer. One of the ladies thus sank, de la Fond being at the moment too far from her to save her. Next the chaplain relaxed his hold, and but for the lieutenant would have been drowned then and there. Making a quick grab at the man, the officer seized him and held him up. The chaplain begged to be allowed to die. "I am half drowned already," he moaned, "and it is only prolonging my misery." But M. de la Fond would not listen, and assured him that they would keep together as long as possible.

The yawl, which, it will be remembered, had been early launched by a few of the sailors, presently appeared not far from the spot, and the officer hailed her, calling out that he was the lieutenant, and begging to be taken in. The sailors were willing enough to receive him, but they had no mind to come near the crowd on the mast, knowing well that to do so meant the swamping of the craft, and the probable destruction of all. So they advised De la Fond to swim out to them. Thoroughly exhausted though he was, he yet made the attempt, for it was his only chance. It was a terrible struggle for life, but the plucky fellow succeeded, and, together with the master and the pilot, who swam with him, was dragged into the yawl. The men at once pulled away from the ship, the end of which was evidently near.

The yawl had got to a distance of a few hundred yards when a fearful roar thundered out. "The explosion was terrible. A dense cloud of smoke ascended from the shattered wreck, and obscured the sun for a short time. Pieces of flaming timber were hurled into the air, and falling, crushed the miserable beings who were struggling in the sea for their existence. Even the yawl was not

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beyond the reach of danger. The spectacle shocked them dreadfully, the sea around them being covered with the burned and mangled bodies of their friends, some of whom retained life enough to struggle and be sensible of the horrors around them."

The lieutenant, who was one of the very few in the yawl to keep his wits in working order, got his men to pull to the spot after the *Prince* had disappeared, not to pick up any poor wretch, for the boat was already full, but in the hope that provisions or other useful articles might be found. At first they met with nothing of value to them, but, after cruising about awhile, they were lucky enough to secure a cask of brandy, a little salt pork, some cloth, and other things. Then, night coming on, when it would be dangerous to remain amongst such a mass of floating wreckage, they were compelled to pull to a distance. All night the men worked with a will, placing an oar for a mast, rigging up a piece of cloth for a sail, and so forth.

These preparations were needed, for the shipwrecked sailors were at least six hundred miles from the nearest land, and they did not know exactly in which direction even that lay. But Lieutenant de la Fond took the helm, and with a spanking breeze from the east, the yawl was quickly carried far from the scene of the disaster, travelling towards the west. The voyage on which these men thus entered proved to be a very remarkable one, when the length of it is considered and the diminutiveness of the craft, to say nothing of the exceedingly small supply of food on board. As for water, there was none. Many of the sailors were literally naked, and in the day-time suffered from the intense heat of the sun, while at night their position was not much better, the cold often

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being severe. Nothing but a small piece of pork could be given daily to each man, and even that before long they had to refuse, the effect on their stomachs being such as to render them all seriously ill. The brandy slaked their thirst not at all ; indeed, it only made matters worse. A shower of rain was hailed as a godsend, the men catching the precious drops in their hands, and sucking the saturated sail. They saw plenty of fish, but were unable to catch a single one. As for their course, they could judge of it only by observing the rising and setting of the sun, but they knew that they were being borne across the wide Atlantic in the direction of South America.

The lieutenant constantly tried to cheer his companions, but it is no wonder that at times even his own spirits drooped. To cross from the African side of the ocean to the coast of America, and that in a small boat, without provisions or water, appeared to be truly a hopeless enterprise. Scarcely any hope indeed was left in the breasts of the poor fellows. But the boat sped rapidly on under a good breeze ; that was their only comfort. Thus day after day dragged slowly by. On the eighth day of their cramped and miserable voyage M. de la Fond remained for ten consecutive hours at the rudder, and in the evening dropped exhausted. His mates were in no better case, and a night of suffering and despair was spent. But, happily, it was, in more senses than one, the darkness that comes before the dawn.

To their indescribable delight, as soon as morning broke, on the ninth day, the sailors perceived land ahead. The sight brought life back to them, and they renewed their exertions. And exertions were required. A current was found to be carrying the yawl away from the land, or

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rather along the coast, instead of towards it, and the difficulty had to be got over by careful and skilful steering. De la Fond was fortunate enough to run his craft in safety ashore, and the men, wild with joy, sprang out upon the beach. They even rolled themselves in the sand, so rejoiced were they to be once more on land. Yet even now their condition was deplorable, for they were parched with thirst, starving, and in a feeble state of health; moreover, they did not know whether they had fallen upon a land of savages. "Some were quite naked, others had only their shirts, which were in rags. De la Fond fastened a piece of scarlet cloth about his waist, that he might appear to be the chief of the party."

Before long they perceived a body of some fifty men approaching, and, to their infinite relief, they saw they had at least to do with civilised people. The natives turned out to be Portuguese, who, as soon as they heard the strange story of the sailors, carried the poor fellows off to their huts. The inhabitants could scarce believe that the tiny yawl had brought her crew across almost the whole breadth of the great Atlantic Ocean. On the way to the settlement was a river, and into this the wretched beings plunged with frantic delight, drinking greedily, and bathing their bodies. The bath, they found, worked wonders for them; they felt like new beings. The community living by the shore consisted entirely of poor folk, but they gave what food they could to the shipwrecked Frenchmen. They then led them to a larger settlement, a mile or two inland, where they were well cared for.

Unwilling to be a burden to their kind hosts, and now somewhat refreshed, the sailors set off to walk to Paraiba, forty or fifty miles away, and after a good deal of suffering and hardship reached the place. Their troubles were

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now at an end. From Paraiba they were conveyed by sea to Pernambuco, where they were lucky enough to get a passage in a Portuguese ship back to Europe. It is sad to relate that the gallant lieutenant, who had played such a splendid part all through, arrived home a broken and ruined man. His health had been hopelessly shattered by what he had gone through, and every penny he had in the world had gone down with the ill-starred *Prince*, when three hundred of his comrades had perished. But the name of De la Fond is one that deserves to be remembered as that of a right noble sailor.

CHAPTER XIX

THE DISASTER AT SAMOA

Terrific hurricane at Samoa—The harbour of Apia—Seven warships there—The German ship *Eber* drags her anchors—Overwhelmed with nearly her entire crew—The *Adler's* fate—The American vessel *Nipsic* beached—The wreck of the *Vandalia*—Captain knocked senseless and swept away—The *Trenton* and the *Olga*—The British *Calliope*—Her captain determines to attempt to run out—Collisions—"Every pound of steam"—But only half a knot an hour—Safe outside the harbour—*Calliope* back at Samoa—Runs for Sydney—Immense enthusiasm—"Nerve and decision."

"THE worst shipping disaster since the use of steam came in." These words, or something like them, were used by Captain Kane, of H.M.S. *Calliope*, after the terrific hurricane in the Samoa Islands, in the year 1889. That they were abundantly justified may be seen even from the brief but fearful message received from the American Admiral Kimberley, soon after the catastrophe, or rather the series of catastrophes. "Terrific hurricane at Apia," the telegram ran, "for nearly two days; every vessel in harbour ashore, except English ship *Calliope*, which got out to sea." When it is added that besides the losses in Apia harbour there were eight other vessels destroyed on the same coast, but outside the harbour, it will be at once understood that a naval disaster of appalling magnitude had taken place. The story is worth telling in detail and at some length.

The Samoa or Navigators' Islands are a group in the

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Southern Pacific, and, like most of the other groups out there, they are mainly of volcanic origin, but with coral reefs around or amongst them. The harbour of Apia, on one of the islands, is almost entirely closed in by such a reef, the openings from the nearly land-locked stretch of water being few, and, with one exception, 'small. In March, 1889, this harbour was crowded with foreign war vessels, a strange sight in such a spot. Why those men-of-war were at Samoa need not be explained here; it is sufficient to say that there were ships belonging to three of the great Powers of the world, America, Germany, and Britain.

The barometer had given warning that a severe storm was at hand. But then the Samoa Islands lie in a belt subject to hurricanes, and, indeed, severe tempests are too common there to be specially feared. Captain Kane, the commander of the one British ship there, did not like the look of the weather, but every one assured him that the rising storm was not likely to be more severe than many another which had come and gone. For all that the captain, wise man as he was, prepared for awkward developments and emergencies. He kept steam up, and had out no fewer than five anchors. In the harbour were also the *Eber*, the *Adler*, and the *Olga*, German men-of-war, as well as the American warships the *Vandalia*, the *Trenton*, and the *Nipsic*. Of smaller trading craft there were likewise a good many.

The storm rapidly increased in severity, and before long it was raging with a fury rarely, if ever, before witnessed by any of those who experienced it. The situation became truly alarming. Even within the encircling coral reef that forms the harbour the ships were dragging violently at their anchors, the thick cables creaking and

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groaning under the tremendous strain. Moreover, the great battleships were so near to each other that collisions were inevitable. And a single blow from the formidable ram of one of them might in a minute send to the bottom a neighbour ship and every soul on board her. Disasters were not long in coming.

Of all the long series of mishaps that day, one of the most deplorable and dreadful was the first. It was six o'clock on the morning of the 16th of March, and most of the men were under hatches. It was a wild scene that met the eye in the harbour, the huge vessels tossing wildly in all directions and tugging at their cables, while the decks were swept by incredible masses of water. Presently the German *Eber* dragged her anchors, and instantly she was driven towards the coral reef. She was quite helpless, and the next moment she had struck, broadside on. There was a heavy lurch—a stagger back, and then——! Then the noble vessel heeled suddenly over and sank in deep and surging water. There was a shout from those who witnessed this appalling disaster, but all was over almost before the cry had left the throats of the distressed spectators. Nothing could be done; hardly a man on board the *Eber* escaped. The catastrophe was as complete as it was sudden.

It was now the turn of the *Adler*, another of the German ships. Her men were fortunately on deck, and prepared to make a fight for existence if the worst should come. The sea and the hurricane lifted this vessel bodily and threw her with her beam-ends on the reef. In a moment scores of sailors were struggling for their lives in the raging waters. The surf was tossing madly around the poor fellows, and it seemed impossible that any man could survive. However, several of the strugglers made

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for the shore. Now a man would succumb, throw up his arms helplessly and hopelessly, and disappear in the boiling sea ; another, more fortunate, would win to land, and drag himself, exhausted but saved, out of the water. This ship had not heeled over when she sank, and the masts stuck out above the surface ; to these clung a crowd of sailors. It was a most precarious position, for it was seen that the masts must go. They did go, falling over with a crash, and flinging the men into the surf as their brethren had been flung before. The same heartrending scenes came over again ; some perished ; some, the captain amongst them, got to shore.

The United States vessel *Nipsic* also dragged her anchors. But in this case the commander was luckily able to keep some control over his ship. Anxiously he cast his eye around in search of a suitable bit of shore where he might attempt to run his vessel aground. Perceiving what he wanted, he ran for the spot, and with excellent seamanship beached his ship in shallow and somewhat smoother water. The men scrambled to the shore, and, but for an unfortunate occurrence, all would have been saved. But one boat capsized in the surf, and six or seven men were drowned. As for the ship, it was hoped that eventually she might be got off again.

The account of the wreck of the *Vandalia*, which may be taken next, although out of its strict order, is heart-breaking reading. Like the *Eber*, this ship was flung right upon the reef. The shock when she struck was tremendous, and caused a regrettable loss at the very outset. Her captain was hurled upon a Gatling gun and was knocked senseless. Before the poor fellow could be assisted, or could assist himself, a heavy sea swept the deck and carried him away. In horror the scene matches

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that of the wreck of the *Eber*. "Of the officers and crew, several were washed overboard and drowned. Others perished after a hard struggle to swim ashore. Others remained for hours in the rigging, which still remained above water, but were carried away one by one by the green waves that never ceased to wash over them." *One by one washed away!* Yet they were within a few yards of the shore, where stood spectators, and were surrounded by other ships with watching crews. Alas! none could help them of all that looked on and bewailed the awful fate of their brethren.

There were still left the *Trenton*, the *Olga*, and the *Calliope*. The first was a corvette, and presently she was driven violently upon the *Vandalia*. The *Trenton* reeled, capsized, and then floated bottom upwards. Strange to say, even with a disaster so sudden and so terrible, not a man was lost from this vessel. All this time the *Olga* had stood the gale well, tossing violently and tugging at her cables, it is true, but still riding out the storm, notwithstanding the battered condition to which she had been reduced by collisions and the heavy seas. Somewhat later in the morning her turn came. Becoming unmanageable, she broke away and drove headlong upon the beach. Most fortunately she struck in perhaps the very best place for the purpose which the harbour could show. Not a single life was lost of the *Olga's* company. Thus far the destruction of no fewer than six battleships has been described. The sacrifice of life was fearful, the *Vandalia* alone having lost her captain and 193 men.

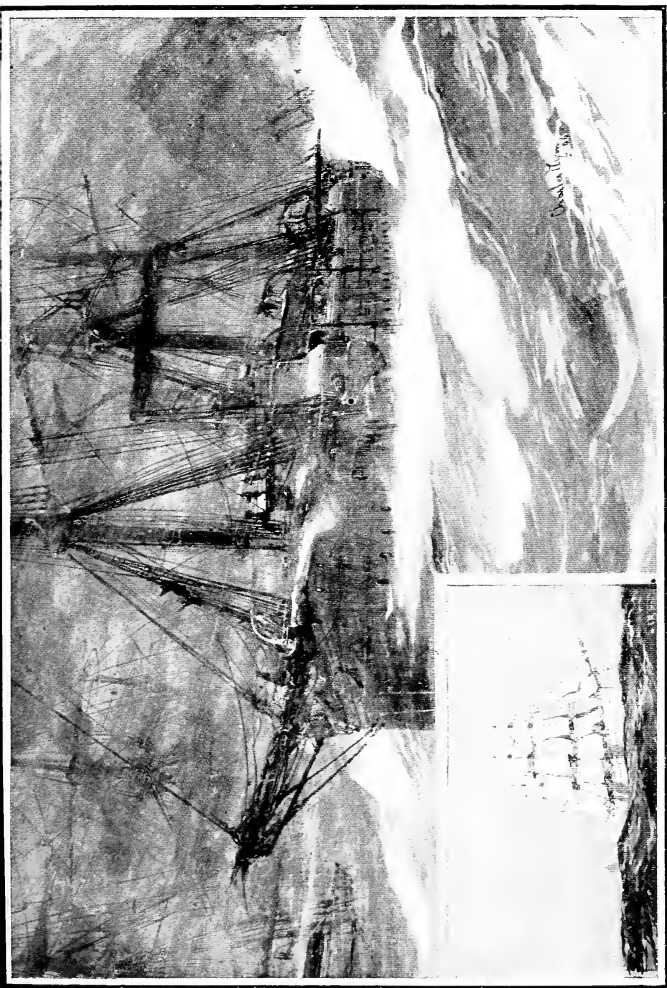
We must now turn to the British *Calliope*. Her commander, as has already been mentioned, had taken the precaution to keep up full steam. First one, then another of his anchors dragged, till three had gone.

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Captain Kane was desirous of beaching his ship, after the manner of the *Nipsic* and the *Olga*. But he soon found that in his case the thing was quite impossible in such a terrific sea. Then for a little while this gallant and skilful officer debated within himself what course it would be best for him to pursue. It needed a cool head, a strong nerve, and a rare decision. The man who possessed them all was there, and he possessed the qualities in full measure.

The risk involved in the step Captain Kane decided to take was so great that it could be justified only by the fact that the risk there was in remaining was greater than that in attempting to steam out. One after another his companion ships had been driven to their doom; was any better fate to be anticipated for the British vessel, should she remain in the harbour? Most fortunately the attempt was crowned with the most brilliant and gratifying success; had it been otherwise, it can hardly be doubted that the captain would have been seriously blamed by many who understood nothing of his difficulties. Captain Kane had already taken up his fourth anchor; now he slipped his fifth, and turned the *Calliope's* head towards the best of the openings in the circling reef.

At first it seemed as if everything was conspiring to thwart the efforts of a brave and skilful seaman. The force of the hurricane was frightful; there was no standing against it; it was impossible to keep one's feet save by clinging hard to some part of the ship. There had come a thickness and a darkness in the atmosphere which baffled all efforts of the eye to penetrate it. In the captain's own words, "the weather was as thick as pea soup." Whether he were "ten miles from the reef or only ten yards," he was quite unable to see. Then there



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H.M.S. *Calliope* was the only vessel of all the nationalities to ride out the terrific storm, and at no time, although her engines were straining to their utmost, could she make more than half a knot an hour. As she slowly forged past the U.S.A., *Trenton* the plucky American tars gave her a rousing cheer.

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was the uncertainty as to the behaviour of the vessel under the conditions obtaining. Would she answer her helm? Would she be manageable at all? Nothing but actual trial could decide that. To crown all, one of the American vessels, the *Trenton*, which afterwards capsized, was exactly in the fairway. The seas were described as perfectly fearful, and almost without cessation the water swept in tremendous volumes over the decks.

Mishaps came early. First there was a collision with the unfortunate *Vandalia*. The *Calliope's* bowsprit was instantly carried away, but luckily no other serious damage was done. Then the British ship was within an ace of being rammed by the *Olga*, a catastrophe that would have quickly ended ship and crew alike. A second collision with the *Vandalia* no seamanship could avert, but again the mishap resulted in no serious damage to the vessel. The powerful engines, even under the fullest possible pressure of steam, were unable to make any headway at all. At no time during the struggle to get out was the *Calliope* able to make more than half a knot per hour, a fact which says everything as to the severity of the storm. Captain Kane shall tell his story himself from this point.

“I called on the Staff-Engineer for every pound of steam he could give me, and slipped the one remaining cable. I had slipped the sheet some time before, finding it did no good and hampered my movements. The engines worked admirably, and little by little we gathered way, and went out, flooding the upper deck with green seas, which came in over the bows, and which would have sunk many a ship. My fear was that she would not steer, and would go on the reef in the passage-way out, especially as the *Trenton* was right in the fairway. But

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we went under her stem, putting our foreyard over her quarter-boat, and came up head to wind most beautifully. Once outside, it was nothing but hard steaming; if the engines held out, we were safe; if anything went wrong with them, we were done for. Thanks to the admirable order in which engines and boilers have been kept, all went well."

Thus, amid the cheers of some who looked on, the *Calliope*, alone of all the war vessels present in the Samoa harbour, got safe out to sea. Not a man of her company had been lost, and there was but one case of injury, a serious case, it is true, but not fatal. The vessel's hull was undamaged, or nearly so, though she had suffered several minor bits of injury. Her fore-yard was sprung, her head and stem had been crushed, and all her boats had been carried away except one. All the fastenings of the bowsprit had been torn off, and three or four of her anchors were gone. Still, the vessel had brought herself and her crew out of the death-trap which the Apia harbour was that day.

It may be asked how it was that the *Calliope* escaped while all the others came to grief. Was it because she occupied some better and safer position in the harbour? Hardly that, as the collisions showed. Was it that she possessed engines superior to those of the other vessels? There is nothing to show whether this was the case or no, but Captain Kane gives the highest praise to the engineers and the firemen. Says he, "The way in which the engineer officers and stokers kept to their work, is beyond all praise." Was it, to resume our questions, that the crew of the *Calliope* was superior to those of the rest of the warships? No one would venture to assert so much; yet that Captain Kane was well satisfied with his com-

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pany, abundantly appears. In his report to the Admiralty at home he writes thus: "I cannot speak too highly of the conduct of every officer and man on board the sloop. During the hours we passed, when any moment might have been our last, every order was obeyed with alacrity and without confusion." There remain two other explanations; the *Calliope's* escape was due to excellent seamanship, or—it was a bit of sheer good luck. Naturally every British reader will like to think that the seamanship for which his race has been famous for a thousand years did not fail, even in the terrible and almost unprecedented hurricane at Samoa. And such a feeling is not incompatible with the highest admiration for the skill and the bravery displayed by the other crews there present. Captain Kane himself bears testimony to the judgment with which certain of the vessels were handled. In speaking of the *Adler*, for instance, he says that "by good management she slipped her cables at the right moment, or she would have gone down in deep water," instead of, as she did, in a place where a large number of the men could and did save themselves.

But leaving all this, the news of the disaster out in the Pacific was received with consternation and horror by the whole civilised world; sympathy with the sufferers, and with the great American and German nations generally, was abundantly shown. Queen Victoria at once sent messages of deep condolence to the President of the United States and the Emperor of Germany, to which those distinguished personages sent grateful replies. The British officers at Gibraltar were among the many that forwarded a message of brotherly sympathy, a step that was greatly appreciated in both Germany and America. Other steamers with men and stores were at once sent

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out by the two countries to supply the place of those that had been lost. The Emperor, it was said, was specially grieved. His navy was but young, yet it had already sustained two or three very heavy and deplorable losses. Now, to lose three ships of war and a large number of brave sailors at one stroke came as a crushing blow.

When Captain Kane got clear of the fatal Apia harbour he was still in a critical position. To beat up against the hurricane was impossible; all he could do was to let his ship drive as it listed before the wind. All the remainder of the 16th she did thus ride; but on the 17th the storm abated a good deal, and he returned to Samoa, and that for two reasons. He wanted to ascertain the exact position of affairs there before he steamed away to Sydney, and he was running short of coal. He found the *Nipsic* afloat again; the rest of the ships, with the possible exception of the *Olga*, were hopelessly broken. Diving operations were going on, and the British captain at once sent Admiral Kimberley a diving-suit and apparatus. The American admiral had already given the *Calliope* a ten-oared boat, to take the place of her lost craft. There was nothing more Kane could do, and after purchasing 150 tons of coal from a German firm at Apia, the only place where it could be got, he set his course for Sydney. Common prudence dictated this step. Samoa was a region liable to these terrible hurricanes, and he was apprehensive that another storm was brewing. Moreover, the Consul was of opinion that there was no longer any need for warships to keep order there.

It is no wonder that thousands of folk flocked to see the *Calliope* when she reached Sydney. The story of her escape at Samoa caused immense enthusiasm among the

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Australians. Officers and crew received warm congratulations from all quarters, Lord Carrington, the Governor, leading the way. And, when the news spread, the rest of the vast empire of Britain was quite as eager to send its felicitations.

Altogether the story of the hurricane at Samoa, and of the marvellous escape of the *Calliope* alone among all the battleships, is not likely to be forgotten in our generation. Officers and men well deserved the hearty thanks of the Admiralty, and as for the captain, no one can doubt that, in the words of the Government dispatch, he "showed both nerve and decision."

CHAPTER XX

THE ROMANCE OF THE ATLANTIC CABLE

“The triumph of our age”—Mr. Cyrus Field and the Atlantic Cable project—The *Niagara* and the *Agamemnon* leave Valentia with the cable—Haps and mishaps—The cable breaks!—Another attempt—Ships meet in mid-Atlantic—A violent storm—Splicing operations—A huge whale fouls the cable!—Breakage and loss of cable—A return to England for more—Success—Messages across the Atlantic—Cable ceases to “speak”—The *Great Eastern*—Takes new coil on board—More mishaps—Suspensions of foul play—All goes merrily till two-thirds of the work is done—Cable breaks—Fishing for a million of money—A second rope also breaks—A third and last try—Forging a grapnel, a weird scene on board—Another failure—The cable of 1866—*Great Eastern* reaches Newfoundland—The cable of 1865 recovered and completed—A magnificent work.

SO accustomed are we at the present day to send messages by cable to distant continents, that we are in danger of forgetting the splendid story of the laying of the first of those great sub-ocean cables, the Atlantic Telegraph. Yet the final success which was achieved was considered by the people of America as the most important event in the history of their continent since its discovery in 1492. And the *Times* newspaper gave expression to much the same opinion when it said, “Since the discovery of Columbus nothing has been done in any degree comparable to the vast enlargement which has thus been given to the sphere of human activity.”

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On both sides of the Atlantic there was mighty rejoicing ; America especially went wild with joy, for not only would she benefit enormously, but in Mr. Cyrus Field she had supplied the hero of the romance. And romance it was. As it has been well said, "It was truly a marvellous romance of civilisation, this Atlantic Telegraph. Even should our age produce nothing else, it alone would be the triumph of our age." Such was the feeling when, now more than forty years back, the first Transatlantic cable was laid and set to work in the service of man. We can have no better guide to the story of this wonderful enterprise than Dr. W. H. Russell, the famous *Times* correspondent.

The first attempt to establish telegraphic communication between Europe and America was made in 1857. The scheme was looked upon by many as a silly freak, certain to be costly, and foredoomed to failure. Not so thought Mr. Cyrus Field, a wealthy and energetic American citizen, a man, moreover, full of high aims and lofty aspirations for the benefit of mankind. Not so thought the world-famous Professor William Thomson, far better known of late years by his title of Lord Kelvin. The latter was certain that the thing could be made a success electrically, and the former was equally sure that from an engineering point of view also success might be counted on.

But all these preliminaries may be left. Towards the end of July two ships, the *Niagara* and the *Agamemnon*, with two or three thousand miles of cable on board, left the shores of Valentia, the most westerly part of Ireland, for the voyage across the wide ocean. A stirring scene it was when the Lord-Lieutenant himself received the shore end on the beach, the points of vantage near by being

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covered with spectators. Then the two vessels started on their way, the *Niagara* paying out the cable as she steamed slowly on. This ship was to carry half the great coil to the middle of the Atlantic, from which point the sister ship was to continue the task to Newfoundland. It was August 7th, and a magnificent day. Everybody was in high spirits and confident of success. Their hopes were speedily dashed; only five miles out an unfortunate hitch occurred. The cable got entangled in the paying-out machinery and broke. The necessary splicing was done, and the *Niagara* steamed on her way again. Everything went swimmingly. A hundred—two hundred—three hundred miles of cable had run over the stern into the sea. The bed of the Atlantic is shallow near the Irish coast, but after a couple of hundred miles or so, suddenly drops down to the enormous depth of twelve thousand feet, as if it were a mountain side. A mountain side it is, in sober truth, though a submerged one. The ships had passed this critical point, and were now two hundred and eighty miles from the island of Valentia. The length of cable paid out, however, was no less than three hundred and eighty miles, and it became clear that not enough allowance had been made for the “slack” when the length of cable needed had been estimated. Be that as it might, without warning the cable parted with a snap, the stern of the ship having lurched up against the portion hanging down into the water. Swish! the precious cord swept into the sea and disappeared, to drop down, down, to the appalling depths of the ocean. Who can picture the scene? No wonder many a strong man burst into tears. From the most famous scientist or engineer present to the humblest cabin boy, all had taken the most intense interest in the

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progress of the work, and all were now correspondingly overwhelmed with emotion. There was nothing for it but to steam back to Ireland, which they had so recently quitted with the highest hopes filling their breasts.

The next summer, that of 1858, saw another attempt on the part of Mr. Field and his colleagues; such men were not to be daunted. We may watch the two ships again together, but this time in mid-Atlantic, for the plan had been altered. The two halves of the cable were to be spliced out there, and then the vessels were to steam away, the *Niagara* on to America, the other back to Ireland, both paying out cable as they went. The splicing was done only after enormous difficulties. A violent storm arose, and for days the vessels were parted from each other. The seas ran mountains high, and the immense weights carried by the ships exposed them to fearful danger. At one time it seemed as if ships and men would all be sent to those profound depths to which it had been hoped to drop the cable yard by yard, and mile by mile. For seven days the hurricane raged. Then there came a change, and with exceeding joy the crew of the *Niagara* spied the sister ship once more approaching.

The splicing was done, to be followed by an immediate breakage, a dispiriting omen! However, a second joining was made, and the vessels parted company. And now a singular incident occurred. Towards evening a huge whale was seen dragging its unwieldy bulk right across the place where the cable was descending from the *Agamemnon* with a great sweeping curve into the sea. The hearts of the watchers flew into their mouths, to use a common expression. Would the animal foul the cable? And if so, what would be the result? The whale grazed the cord, and for an instant it seemed as if the issue of

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the 1858 expedition were going to be as disastrous as that of the previous year. Hurrah! the cheer went up; the animal had passed on, leaving the cable safe.

A few miles had been paid out by each ship when there came another breakage. There was a third splicing, and then on again. But suddenly and all unaccountably there was another snap, and down went the broken end of the wire to the floor of the Atlantic more than two miles below! There was but one thing to do, to go back for more cable, for one hundred and forty-four miles were lying lost and useless at the bottom of the ocean. It says volumes for the magnificent pluck and determination of the resolute American and his English partners that they did not waste an hour in repining, but hurried home so that the attempt might be renewed while summer still lasted.

Once more the two ships met in mid-ocean, and on July 29th, in beautiful weather, the splicing was again effected. Day by day each vessel made progress, each day bringing the enterprise nearer to a glorious issue. All the while the ships were able to communicate with each other by means of the wire they were laying. So well had everything been timed, that the vessels reached their respective destinations on the same day, the *Agamemnon* landing at Valentia, the *Niagara* at Heart's Content, Newfoundland. Between two and three in the afternoon of August 18th, the first flash was sent the whole distance across the mighty Atlantic. The first message to traverse those thousands of miles of deep-submerged wire was this: "Glory to God in the highest; on earth, peace, good will towards men!" Then Queen Victoria and the President of the United States sent friendly and memorable congratulations to each other. Great were

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the rejoicings on both sides, especially across the ocean. "England was delighted, but America was wild with joy."

Alas! in a day or two the current grew weak, then weaker, and at last ceased altogether! The cable-laying had been a splendid bit of engineering work, but electrically the cable itself was a dismal failure. It was enough to drive the boldest heart and the most sanguine breast to despair. But it did not drive the promoters to despair; on the contrary, they were soon planning another attempt. It was not, however, as it fell out, to be made for another seven years.

Everybody has heard of the *Great Eastern*, the most prodigious vessel up to that time turned out by the skill of man. The world of a generation ago was amazed at the dimensions of that wonderful craft; a stroll round her meant a walk of nearly three-quarters of a mile. The Atlantic Telegraph Company saw what an advantage it would be to have the whole of the cable on one ship, and the *Great Eastern* was the only craft afloat capable of carrying it. So three enormous tanks were fitted up in the ocean monster, and into these the new cable, a far stronger one than the former, was stowed. "It is almost dark at the immense depth below, and we can only dimly discern the human figures through whose hands the coil passes to its bed. Suddenly, however, the men begin singing. They intone a low, plaintive song of the sea . . . the sounds of which rise up from the dark, deep cavern with startling effect, and produce an indescribable impression."

The shore end of the new cable was made fast to the rocks towering above Foilhummerum Bay, in Valentia Island. The cliffs were dotted with the rustic inhabitants.

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“What the peasantry in the neighbourhood thought of the scene, not even they themselves could say; they seem to have had a sort of vague idea that the cable was to carry them over to America, whither so many of their countrymen had emigrated!” The whole civilised world was in thought watching that scene on the rugged Valentian coast. A few miles out at sea the shore-end was connected with the main coil lying in the *Great Eastern*, and the momentous voyage began.

Sir Robert Peel, in the speech he had made at the start, had trusted that no difficulties might arise to hinder the successful completion of the great work. It was not to be. A few score miles from the coast of Ireland the cable ceased to speak, or nearly so; something was wrong. And now came a sight which had not been seen before in the cable-laying operations. The vast ship had been fitted with a “pick-up apparatus.” The cable was cut and the end attached to a buoy, while the ship went back, hauling in the submerged length. Ten miles away was found a place where a bit of the outer wire had been driven right into the core of the cable; this was the offender. However, the necessary repairs were made, and the *Great Eastern* resumed her voyage. Twice or thrice did this sort of thing occur, until it began to be suspected that there was foul play somewhere. The men were closely questioned, but nothing could be found out as to the culprit. So enraged were the workmen generally, that if the dastardly offender had been discovered, it would not have been easy to prevent a lynching scene on board. One or other of the superior officials from this time mounted guard constantly at the tank.

All went merrily now, and two-thirds of the broad Atlantic had been traversed. Already the men were

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looking forward to the rejoicings when the great task should have been brought to a successful termination. "The conviction grew," says Dr. Russell, and we can imagine the scene, "that the work was nearly accomplished. Some were planning out journeys through the United States; others speculated on the probability of sport in Newfoundland; the date of our arrival was already determined upon. The sound of the piano, a tribute to our contentment, rose from the saloon; and now and then the notes of a violin became entwined in the melodious labyrinth through which the amateur professors wandered with uncertain fingers. The artists sketched vigorously. Men stretched their legs lustily along the decks, or penetrated with easy curiosity for the first time into the recesses of the leviathan that bore them."

But stay! Here is another fault. Again the picking-up process must be done. The weight of the cable is enormous, for the ocean is here more than two miles deep. The strain on the wire is very great, and suddenly there is heard a fatal snap. A great cry goes up as the broken end whirs along the deck and over the vessel's stern, to drop into water 12,000 feet deep! "Is anybody hurt?" was anxiously asked, but most fortunately all had escaped injury. But the lost cable! "It is enough to move one to tears, and when a man came with a piece of the end lashed still to the chain, and showed the tortured strands, the torn wires, the lacerated core, it is no exaggeration to say that a feeling of pity, as if it were some sentient creature which had been thus mutilated and dragged asunder by brutal force, moved the spectators."

The task was now to pick up that lost cable. But

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what a task ! How is that slender cord lying among the ooze of the ocean bed two thousand fathoms down to be felt for and seized ? And if seized, how is it to be hauled up again ? A huge grapnel was fastened to the end of a wire rope of great strength, and with this the cable was to be fished up, if at all. As Dr. Russell so picturesquely puts it, "the giant Despair was going to fish from the *Great Eastern* for a take worth, with all its belongings, more than a million sterling." The grapnel was allowed to run slowly down till no less than 15,000 feet—the height of Mont Blanc!—of wire rope had gone over the bows. At length, after much groping, something began to pull. Was it some bit of wreck lying on the ocean bed far below, or was it the cable they were so anxiously seeking ? The hauling-in began ; steadily it was pursued, till nearly half the rope had been brought back. Then, without warning, one of the swivels connecting the different lengths of which the rope was made broke. Down went the cable again, and with it more than eight thousand feet of wire rope, as well as the grapnel !

The story of the second attempt need not be detailed at length. Once more the rope broke, and the second grapnel with a mile of rope went after the first. But the brave men determined on yet one more try. The smiths forged another grapnel, and every bit of wire rope available on board was brought into requisition. The spectacle on the monster ship must have been indeed a strange one. To quote a few words from our authority once more. "The forge fires glared on the decks of the great ship, and there, out in the midst of the Atlantic, anvils rang and sparks flew. . . . Outside all was obscurity, but now and then vast shadows, which moved across the arc of the lighted fog-bank, were projected far

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away by the flare ; and one might well pardon the passing mariner, whose bark drifted him in the night across the track of the great ship, if, crossing himself, and praying with shuddering lips, he fancied he beheld a phantom ship freighted with an evil crew, and ever after told how he had seen the workshops of the Inferno floating on the bosom of the ocean."

What thoughts must have passed through the breast of Cyrus Field when this third—and final, as he knew it to be—attempt to recover the lost cable was in progress ! Nor were his companions less agitated. Some hid themselves till success or failure should be announced ; some tried to read, to smoke, to sleep ; none of these things could they do. Those who remained to watch the operations looked on with straining eyes, their ears painfully on the alert to catch the sound of a fatal snap, their hearts standing almost still in their excitement. Not often has a more thrilling time been passed, or a more absorbing spectacle been witnessed, than the *Great Eastern* furnished that day. Though the danger was absent, there was all the element of apprehension present that appertains to the progress of a great battle. All at once the whistle sounded ; something was wrong. Then loud cries of "Stop her !" "Look out !" were heard, and every face was agitated with emotion. "Then there was silence. I knew at once all was over. The machinery stood still in the bows, and for a moment every man was fixed, as if turned to stone. There, standing blank and mute, were the hardy, constant toilers, whose toil had ended at last. Our last bolt was sped ; the battle was over. Nigh two miles more of iron coils of wire and rope were added to the entanglement of the great labyrinth . . . in the bed of the ocean."

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Thus sadly ended the operations of 1865, and the world judged that no more attempts would be made to lay an Atlantic cable. They were wrong ; the summer of the following year, 1866, saw the *Great Eastern* once more off the Irish coast, a new cable on board, and, what was more, new and far better picking-up apparatus, for it was intended not only to lay the fresh cable, but to find and complete that of the former year.

The work was attended by the usual hopes and fears. Storms threatened, faults were found, and once the coil got itself into a tremendous tangle in the tank, a tangle that seemed at first to defy all unravelling, and threatened to cause disaster. But all was set right, and the ship steamed on again. Steady progress was made, the vessel paying out something more than a hundred miles a day. Newfoundland was at hand, as the deep fog shrouding the ocean showed. On July 27th, a memorable day, the *Great Eastern* steamed into the harbour of Heart's Content, her task accomplished. The message was flashed across to the Old World that the communication between it and the New was complete. It was, moreover, perfect, for the cable gave better results electrically for every mile it was submerged in the cold depths of the Atlantic. There would be no failure of current now.

Already the approach of the leviathan ship had been announced to Heart's Content by one of the supporting steamers of the *Great Eastern*, which had gone on ahead to tell the joyful news. The demonstrations were even greater and more full of delight than those which had greeted the temporary success of 1858, for now all doubt as to the capability of the cable to do its work and to endure had been removed.

We may dwell for a moment on just one other scene in

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this great act, or rather succession of acts. The *Great Eastern*, with the *Terrible* and other consorts, is busy away back in the Atlantic grappling for the lost cable of 1865. Nine-and-twenty times have the ships let down their monster hooks to catch the long-hidden cord. The tension has grown painful as the men drop the grapnel for the thirtieth time! Surely even these brave fellows will give in if this also results in failure. There comes a tug; the hooks have caught. Carefully, slowly, hour after hour the hauling-in goes on, while deeper grows the agitation in every breast. Breathless now, they watch for the first glimpse of what they so ardently long to see. At last! Here it comes! The cable lies safe on the deck! It is covered on one side with a dark slimy mud, while the other side is clean and white, a proof that as it lay on the floor of the Atlantic the cord was only partly embedded in the ooze. Eagerly the scientists test the cable; *it is as good as ever!*

A few more days, and *two* submarine cables are running, and in splendid working order, between Europe and America. It is a magnificent achievement, after all the haps and mishaps, and all the moments when despair or triumph agitated the breast; after all the adventures that have befallen cable, ships, men. Though there are now more than a dozen such cables carrying their swift messages beneath the deep waters of the Atlantic Ocean, the story of those early attempts will always be one to stir the imagination.

CHAPTER XXI

WRECKED ON AN ICEBERG

Icebergs in the Atlantic—The *Lady Hobart*—Leaves Halifax for England—Strikes on an iceberg in the night—A hasty rush to the boats—The mails thrown overboard—Ship sinks—Emptying a rum cask—Danger from a school of whales—A course set for Newfoundland—Other icebergs—A gale—The two boats separated—A sail!—A delirious man tied down—Another jumps overboard—The captain ill—Another gale—Signs of land—Newfoundland at last.

IT is not always necessary to run into Polar regions to meet with icebergs, as the experience of many an Atlantic vessel proves. Even in these days of steam and improved navigation, there is danger more than a little to be apprehended from the presence of these wandering islands, especially in times of fog or thick weather. As an instance of this, we may take the story of the *Lady Hobart*, one of the old Atlantic mailboats, in the days when steamships were not yet.

The *Hobart* left Halifax, Nova Scotia, in the middle of the summer of 1803, under the command of Captain Fellowes. When three days out, the vessel encountered bad weather, with fog, and a heavy sea. There was, however, so far as could be seen, no special cause for alarm, and the passengers and some of the crew retired for the night as usual. But at one o'clock in the morning everybody was effectually aroused by a tremendous shock. So violent was the concussion, says the captain in his account

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of the affair, "that several of the crew were pitched out of their hammocks." The skipper rushed on deck, and found towering far above his tallest mast, and close to the ship, "an island of ice." It was against this unseen and monster enemy that the *Lady Hobart* had struck. Instantly the helm was put about, but again the vessel crashed upon the huge iceberg. It is probable that she collided more than twice with the berg, for when at length the crew had got her off, her stern-post had been stove in, her rudder carried away, and her hull badly shattered.

The seas were breaking over the vessel with great force, and in a few minutes the hold was filled with water. The situation had in that short space of time become desperate. But prompt action was taken. "We hove the guns overboard, cut away the anchors from the bows, and got two sails under the bottom. Both pumps were kept going, and we continued bailing with buckets from the main hatchway, in hopes of preventing the ship from sinking. But, in less than a quarter of an hour, she settled down to her fore-chains in water. Our situation was now become most perilous." The captain at once consulted with his master, Mr. Bargus, and Captain Thomas, an officer of the Royal Navy, who was a passenger. Both agreed that not a moment should be lost in trying to get out the boats, if it could be done at all in that tossing sea. To save the ship was plainly impossible; it was the lives alone that must be thought of.

Without a murmur the skipper's orders were obeyed; the boats, the cutter and the jolly-boat, were launched, though with great difficulty and risk. Then, without panic, without selfish pushing or disorder, each waited his or her turn to embark. Into the cutter were first placed

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the three ladies the ship's company included. One of these, in her haste to get into the boat, sprang from the deck and fell violently to the bottom. It was a marvel that she neither injured herself seriously nor smashed the craft, to the danger of herself and the rest. All this time the ship was sinking lower and lower in the water, and by the time the boats were filled, only the quarter-deck showed above the surface. At any instant even that might disappear.

But there was much to be done yet. The mails, in their water-tight case, were first ballasted with pigs of iron and then thrown overboard, possibly to be recovered some day. Then hurriedly some provisions were tossed into the boats, forty or fifty pounds of biscuit, a vessel containing five gallons of water, a five-gallon cask of rum, a quantity of spruce beer, and a few bottles of wine, a scanty supply for a company of twenty-nine persons. Two compasses, a quadrant, and a telescope were also taken. An episode Captain Fellowes thinks well worth recording occurred at this time. One of the seamen was observed emptying out a five-gallon bottle of rum, to the astonishment of the captain. The man, however, proceeded to fill the empty vessel with water from a cask on the quarter-deck, the only available supply now. And this was the only water the boats had with them. The thoughtfulness of the sailor, who sacrificed the sailors' favourite drink for water, was praiseworthy. The last to leave the ship was Mr. Bargus, the master, who had utterly refused to precede the skipper. It was not a moment too soon.

"We had scarce quitted the ship when she gave a heavy lurch to port, and then went down head foremost. I had ordered the colours to be hoisted at the main-top-



PURSUED BY WHALES

An immense school of whales pursued the boats, keeping the crews in mortal dread.



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gallant mast-head, with the Union downwards, as a signal of distress, that if any vessel should happen to be near us at the dawn of day, our calamitous situation might attract observation from her and relief be afforded us. At this awful crisis of the ship sinking, when fear might be supposed to be the predominant principle of the human mind, a British seaman, named John Andrews, exhibited uncommon coolness: 'There, my brave fellows,' he exclaimed, 'there goes the pride of old England!'" A pathetic spectacle it was, a gallant ship foundering under the towering heights of the iceberg that had brought destruction to her; two boats, weighed down almost to the water's level with their human freights, tossing on the agitated sea, no land nearer than hundreds of miles, and not a sail in sight!

A strange incident accompanied the sinking of the *Lady Hobart*. An immense school of whales came crowding round the doomed wreck and the neighbouring boats. These monsters of the deep, by their unwieldy antics, might send to the bottom every soul in the little craft. Instantly the men set up a loud whistling and shouting, and did all they knew to drive the animals away, but it was to no purpose. The whales pursued the boats for a full half-hour, and kept the occupants in mortal dread, "frequent instances having occurred, in the fishery, of boats being cut in twain by the force of a single blow from a whale." At last, to their infinite relief, the shipwrecked crews were left in peace, and uninjured.

Captain Fellowes now resolved to steer for Newfoundland, which he estimated to be about three hundred and fifty miles distant, bearing almost due west. It was a disheartening prospect that was before them; provisions small in quantity, and water scarcer still; seas rough and often shrouded in

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fog ; boats crowded to their fullest capacity, there being eighteen persons in the cutter and eleven in the jolly-boat ; and, to make matters worse, the wind dead against them. But it was the only chance of saving their lives, so far as they could see. The men all agreed to the captain's suggestions as to the economising of their stock of eatables and drinkables. The allowance to each person per diem was but half a biscuit and a glass of wine. The water they decided not to touch at all except in case of the direst emergency. A sail was rigged up for the cutter, and the smaller boat was taken in tow. Crowded and cramped to such a degree that a man could with difficulty get his hand into his pocket, the unfortunate folk had before them the prospect of many days of hunger, of raging thirst, of exposure to the dashing seas.

What other dangers they were threatened by they did not need reminding of. Before many hours had passed they found themselves in the neighbourhood of another iceberg. Luckily it was broad daylight, and they avoided it. Later in the day they fell in with yet another of these dangerous rovers, and this also they kept clear of. But what would happen should they in the darkness of the night drive in upon yet another ! And that they were likely enough to meet with more of the icebergs they were well aware. So they passed a sleepless night, and the morning found them cramped, cold, and miserable. Some of their biscuit had been damaged by the sea-water they had shipped, so that even the meagre allowance they had settled upon had to be still further reduced. Half a glassful of rum to each helped to restore the circulation a little, and even the ladies found the benefit of it when, after several refusals, they were prevailed upon to take their share of the spirit. The skipper induced his men

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to work hard at the oars, and for two reasons—to help the cutter to make more way than she could by sail merely, in a breeze but slightly favourable, and also to keep the warmth in their bodies.

In truth, they all needed something to keep up the circulation. Though it was summer time, the weather was intensely cold. Fogs and sleet made the atmosphere very raw, and the spray, which almost incessantly flew over them, began to freeze as it fell, making their position almost unendurable. Matters grew rapidly from bad to worse when a gale sprang up. The tempest increased to such an extent that it was no longer safe to keep the two boats near each other, and the jolly-boat had to be cut adrift. Very soon she was out of sight, to the great distress of those in the cutter. “The uncertainty of ever again meeting the companions of our misfortunes excited the most acute affliction. To add to the misery of our situation, we lost, along with the boat, not only a considerable quantity of our store, but with them our quadrant and spy-glass. The gale increasing with a prodigious heavy sea, we brought the cutter to, about four in the afternoon, by heaving the boat’s sail loose over the bow, and veering it out with a rope bent to each yard-arm, which kept her head to the sea, so as to break its force before it reached us.”

The sixth day of their exposure came, and the captain estimated that St. John’s, Newfoundland, was now less than a hundred and fifty miles distant, so that they had covered some two hundred from the scene of the wreck. The heroism of the ladies especially was beyond all praise, and did not a little to cheer the men and keep them to their work. But it had rained all night, and the condition of the poor creatures had become truly deplorable.

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“The cold became so severe that hardly one in the boat was able to move. Our hands and feet were so swelled that many of them became quite black, owing to our confined state and the constant exposure to wet and cold weather. At daybreak I served out about a third of a wine-glass of rum to each person, with a quarter of a biscuit, and before noon a small quantity of spruce-beer, which afforded us great relief.” As the day wore on, the wind abated, and the cold became less intense, though still severe.

That forenoon a sail was observed in the distance, overjoying the shipwrecked folk. The sight seemed to put new life into them, and every effort was made to attract attention. The skipper tied a lady's shawl to the boat-hook, and, getting up as well as his feeble condition would let him, he waved it till he could wave no longer. The other craft came nearer. Then, to their exceeding surprise, they perceived that it was their own jolly-boat that was approaching, her crew having managed to rig up some sort of sail. What conflicting emotions struggled in their breasts at this discovery! What a disappointment to men and women who had so fervently trusted that the much-hoped-for deliverance was at hand! Yet what a delight to find once more their companions, who in this marvellous way had come back to them after many days and nights of separation on the bosom of the boundless ocean! A more equal distribution of the food and drink between the respective boats was now made, and it was determined that the two should not again separate, except under the most urgent necessity.

Notwithstanding the joy of meeting again, and the fact that they were now but a little more than a hundred miles from St. John's, it was a miserable time that

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succeeded. "The cold, wet, and hunger, which we experienced the following day, are not to be described," says the skipper. Some of the men, in spite of every warning and entreaty, began to drink a good deal of salt water. More than one became delirious, while others were seized with violent internal pains. Worse was still to come. Amongst the company were the skipper and two of the crew of a French schooner, which the *Lady Hobart* had captured at an early stage of the voyage, for it was a time of war between Britain and France. One of the French sailors now became so violent in his delirium that he had to be tied down in the jolly-boat. The French captain had supposed, on the wreck of the *Lady Hobart*, that he and his fellow-prisoners would be left to perish. That notion could never have occurred to a man like Captain Fellowes, and he had in all respects treated the poor Frenchmen as his own crew. But the French master had grown more despondent every day, and at last he suddenly sprang into the sea from the cutter, in a fit of madness. He sank in a moment and never appeared again above the surface. Had it been otherwise, nothing could have been done for the unfortunate man, at the speed with which the cutter was tearing through the water, and with the oars lashed, as they were, to the gunwale. This first loss of life greatly affected nearly all the survivors, and many began from this time to fear the very worst issue for the whole party.

Most of them were more or less unwell by this time, and the captain, who had been the mainstay of the company, himself fell seriously ill. He had violent shivering fits at intervals; he could take no nourishment, and grew feverish and delirious. His companions were alarmed, naturally enough, but the patient dropped into a pro-

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found sleep, which lasted for several hours, and when he woke again, he was bathed in perspiration. But he felt much better; the fever had subsided a good deal, and there was hope for him. This illness caused the deepest anxiety to the rest, for the captain's case might at any hour be that of others, and no man knew if, should he be attacked, he would emerge with results equally favourable.

Bad weather was experienced all along, and it was as much as the miserable people could do to keep down, by baling, the water which was constantly being shipped. The baling had to be done without interruption, by day as well as by night, yet few of the sailors had strength enough to do the work at all. So far as sun and warmth were concerned, the day was little better than the night; only once during the whole time of their exposure did the sun show himself to them. Another gale bore down upon the unhappy creatures, a gale "accompanied with so tremendous a sea, that the greatest vigilance was necessary in managing the helm, for the boats would have broached to from the slightest deviation, and occasioned our inevitable destruction. We scudded before the wind, expecting every returning wave to overwhelm us; but, through the Providence of God, we weathered the storm, which, towards night, began to abate." Nothing need be added to the simplicity of this account; the horrors of the situation can be but feebly imagined by one who has not gone through a like experience. The mere discomforts of the wind, the cold, and the wet were enough to send the sufferers into a serious illness. As for the crew, the poor fellows were in worse case even than the handful of passengers. Such sleep as they got they took as they lay in the water at the bottom of the boats.

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By their reckoning, necessarily imperfect, but the best they could make under the circumstances, they estimated that they ought now to be near St. John's. But the fog was so dense that it was impossible to see more than a few yards ahead. There was great danger lest the boats might unexpectedly run aground, and this might occur at a point where destruction was certain. Some parts of the Newfoundland coast are rocky and dangerous, and to avoid these was now all the care of the shipwrecked. Yet they welcomed with delight the signs of the near neighbourhood of land that were observed—bits of rock-weed floating by, a land bird which came and settled on their very boats for an instant or two. It was plain they were well under the shadow of Newfoundland, and the captain called for a last and special effort from his men. "It was strongly urged to them that should the wind come off the shore in the morning, and drive us to leeward, all exertions to regain it might then be too late, as, independent of our feeble state, the provisions, with all possible economy, could not last more than two days, and the water, which had as yet remained untouched, except in the instances before mentioned, could not hold out much longer. We had been six days and nights constantly wet and cold, and without any other sustenance than the quarter of a biscuit and one wine-glass of liquid for twenty-four hours. The men, who had appeared totally indifferent respecting their fate, now summoned up resolution; and as many as were capable of moving from the bottoms of the boats betook themselves to the oars."

All night they rowed, but were obliged, with the freshening breeze, to cut adrift the jolly-boat again, and, when morning came, those in the cutter could see no

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sign of their companions, so thick was the fog that prevailed. Presently a sound as of the firing of guns was heard, and the men concluded with joy that they were close to land. Singularly enough, however, the noise was afterwards ascertained to be only the blowing of whales. At last the fog cleared and the sun shone out, and in a moment eager eyes spied land less than a mile away. It was near Kettle Cove, in Conception Bay. "I wish that it were possible for me," writes the skipper, "to describe our sensations at this interesting moment. . . . The joy at speedy relief affected us all in a most remarkable way. Many burst into tears; some looked at each other with a stupid stare, as if doubtful of the reality of what they saw; while some were in so lethargic a condition, that no consolation, no animating words, could rouse them to exertion.

A service of thanksgiving was at once held on board the cutter, and the captain did what he had not dared to do before, except in one or two isolated cases; he gave each person a drink of water, yet not too much, for he well knew the danger attending too free an indulgence after a long period of privation. Soon, to the joy of all, they saw their jolly-boat coming to meet them, and with her a schooner. The worst of the troubles for the shipwrecked crew were over. The people on shore flocked in hundreds to see the boats, and helped to carry ashore the poor fellows, many of whom were unable to walk at all. The captain says, and the statement may well be believed, that "nothing could exceed their surprise on seeing the boats that had carried nine-and-twenty persons such a distance over a boisterous sea; and when they beheld so many miserable objects, they could not conceal emotions of pity and concern."

CHAPTER XXII

THE *ALCESTE* IN CHINESE WATERS

The *Alceste* and the *Lyra* in the Canton estuary—A critical time—Insults from the Canton Viceroy—Visit from a mandarin, who promises a “*Chop*”—A second mandarin—A game of bluff—John Bull begins to roar—The frigate opposed by war-junks—British open fire—A telling shot—Attack on the shore batteries—Battery knocked to pieces—The first-class *Chop* arrives in haste—Maxwell with four men rows to Canton—The *Lyra* surrounded by junks—Threatening neighbours—“Pigeon English”—Flight of the Chinese commodore—The British ships masters of the situation.

EARLY in the month of November, 1816, the British frigate *Alceste*, under the command of Captain Maxwell, accompanied by the brig *Lyra*, Captain Hall, sailed for the mouth of the great estuary of the Canton River, and anchored off the island of Lintin. They were bound on an important and, it might be, a ticklish errand. Without dwelling on the history of the events just previous, it may be said that the British Ambassador, Lord Amherst, was about to leave China, diplomatic relations between that country and Britain having been broken off, and the Chinese authorities seemed disposed to be very insulting.

Captain Maxwell, in charge of the expedition, received two messages, one from the British factory at Canton, which lies far up the estuary, complaining that British

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subjects were being treated with scorn and contumely by the Chinese inhabitants. The other was a message of a grossly insulting character from the Viceroy of Canton, ordering the British ships to remain outside the estuary, and as far back as the Ladrone Islands. The Viceroy went on to say that the Ambassador must reach the British ships out there as best he could, for he would not be permitted to take boat either in the Canton River or in the estuary. Whether this order came from the Emperor himself, or only from his subordinate at Canton, Captain Maxwell did not know, but he strongly suspected the latter.

Now the British commander, emphatically a "strong" man, as will shortly appear, was one of those who held an admirable control over his temper, but this disgraceful mandate was too much even for him. On a former occasion, the then Ambassador, Lord Macartney, had carried his ships as far up the inlet as Wampoa, and Maxwell was determined to do the like, whatever anybody might say. However, he was presently visited on board his ship by a mandarin, who spoke smoothly, and promised that in the course of a day or two there should arrive a *Chop*, that is, a written permission to enter the estuary. But a second mandarin, of higher rank, followed closely on the heels of the other, and he expressly forbade the ships to leave the open sea. Captain Maxwell tried to argue with the man, pointing out how inconvenient it would be to Lord Amherst to get himself on board the *Alceste* under the conditions the Chinese were imposing; and further, how insulting such an order was to the representative of a great empire such as Britain was.

It was soon plain that the mandarin had come in order to see of what sort of stuff the British commander was

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made; and his game was partly one of "bluff," and partly to put the greatest amount of insult on him and his flag that the captain would stand. Maxwell saw through it all, and lost no time in giving the official a bit of plain, straightforward speaking. The mandarin was directed to tell his superiors that the ships would ascend to Wampoa, in spite of the Viceroy, or even the Emperor himself. He further asked indignantly what the first mandarin meant by promising a Chop.

"Oh," coolly replied the Chinaman, "that officer happens to be partly a fool, and partly a wit; he was only quizzing you."

"Well," answered Maxwell, with a roar that made the mandarin quiver to the very button of his cap, "I advise his Excellency not to attempt to pass any such humours on me."

But the mandarin had another shot in his locker, and he now with the utmost effrontery informed the captain that the Chinese authorities required the warships to furnish a satisfactory security-merchant, that is, a merchant of high standing in China, who would make himself responsible for the good behaviour of the crews of foreign ships while they were in Chinese seas. This was a requirement that applied only to mercantile shipping, as the wily Chinaman well knew; never had such a thing been heard of in the case of a war vessel. It was clear that a gross insult was intended.

"Let me hear that again, if you please," said Maxwell with admirable calmness, though he was getting warm, and the mandarin repeated the order.

"Are you aware that this is a ship of war—King George the Third of England's frigate *Alceste*?" thundered the captain.

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"I did not know," pretended the mandarin, beginning to be frightened; "I merely wished to learn what sort of goods—what cargo you carry."

Captain Maxwell struck the table with his heavy fist till it fairly danced, as he replied, "Cargo, sir! Powder and shot, sir, are the cargo of a British man-of-war! Did you see his Majesty's pennant flying at the mast-head? If not, take a good look at it on your way back, and tell the Viceroy that you have seen a flag which has never been dishonoured—and please God, while it waves over my head, it never shall be!"

Probably no more singular scene was ever witnessed on board a British battleship. The effect on the Chinaman was extraordinary. "When Captain Maxwell began this address, the mandarin opened his eyes and stared amazedly at him; then rose half off his seat, and presently, with his hands shaking, as if the cold fit of an ague had overtaken him, doffed his cap of office, and gave a glance over his shoulder towards the stern windows, to see whether in extremity he had any chance of making his escape. As Captain Maxwell approached his climax about the flag, and struck the table a second time, the mandarin and the interpreter both retreated, step by step, as far as the sides of the cabin permitted them, where they stood with uplifted hands, quite aghast and in an ecstasy of terror."

The mandarin was thoroughly scared. Yet Captain Hall, who was also present, saw by the twinkle in Maxwell's eye that he was inwardly laughing. The official was very humble for the rest of the interview, and promised that the necessary Chop should be sent on the twenty-third day of the moon, "a grand Chop of the first order," giving full permission to enter the bay. In a

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mighty hurry the mandarin and his interpreter then departed.

Captain Maxwell was well aware that no such permission would be forthcoming, and he was fully prepared to take a strong course, and sail up the estuary as he had stated he would. It was a serious responsibility, for it meant no less than a declaration of war, and moreover, as the Ambassador and numbers of other British subjects were in the enemy's power, the consequences to them might be deplorable indeed.

The day named arrived, but it brought no Chop. Not to appear too precipitate, Maxwell waited till next day, and then, leaving the *Lyra* behind, calmly sailed into the estuary, an arm of the sea of considerable size, forty miles wide at its mouth, and gradually narrowing till, some sixty or seventy miles up, it shrinks to the dimensions of a very large river. He found drawn up to oppose him a fleet of seventeen war-junks of large size, each carrying sixty men and some half-dozen guns. On shore were several batteries, all of which appeared to be crowded with men. Altogether the array was formidable, but Maxwell sailed on as if nothing had happened. Then a ludicrous thing was seen—ludicrous, but meant to be in the highest degree insulting. There put off from the Chinese fleet, a single sampan, or small skiff; it was rowed *by an old woman*, and carried the interpreter who had accompanied the mandarin on board the *Alceste* the other day. This fellow stepped on deck with a great swagger, and informed the captain that he had brought an order from the Chinese Admiral for the frigate to anchor immediately. Maxwell was a good deal tickled, and said in the “pigeon English” employed in those seas, “Suppose no do—what then?”

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"Then I thinkee," replied the interpreter, with just a twinkle in the corner of his eye, "I thinkee that my great mandarin there sinkee your ship."

At this moment, as if to enforce the words of the linguist, the Admiral sent a shot across the bows of the *Alceste*. Maxwell took no notice. Then another roar, and a second shot came along. Thus the firing continued, till every ship in the enemy's line had discharged at least one gun. The British captain, with marvellous good temper and ready wit, calmly thanked the interpreter for the *honour of the salute!* This, although every gun of the Chinese had been shotted! And he ordered three guns, loaded with powder only, to be fired in reply. But the Admiral would have none of it, and at once a heavy fire began from the whole of the fleet. The Chinamen worked their cannon with spirit and rapidly, and it seemed as if the frigate were in for serious damage. But with astonishing coolness Captain Maxwell sailed on, heeding the enemy no more than if they had been a swarm of flies. It was a strange scene. Balls flew just ahead of the *Alceste*, just astern of her, right over her; yet not a single shot struck her. Whether it was bad gunnery, or what boys would call "funk" on the part of the Admiral, it was impossible to say.

A little farther on the frigate was compelled to anchor, the wind dropping and the tide running out fast. The war-junks thereupon took up their positions not far away, and threw out their anchors also. Then, strange to relate, they went on firing as before, and with similar results. Captain Maxwell, who had now a little more time at his disposal, determined to have some fun with the warlike Admiral. So he loaded a thirty-two pounder on the quarter-deck, and prepared to fire it himself. It

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must here be explained that in case damage was done by an enemy's gun, the Chinese always demanded that the man who fired it should be handed over to them—the actual man, and not the officer who gave him the command. Maxwell meant that in this case there should be no dispute as to the right man, and accordingly fired the first shot himself. “The gun was aimed so that the shot should pass over the centre of the commander-in-chief's junk. The effect was instantaneous and most ludicrous; the crews, not only of this vessel, but of the whole line, fell flat on their faces . . . while the Admiral in person was seen for a moment actually in the air, into which he had leaped in the extremity of his amazement, and in the next instant he lay prostrate on the deck. So remarkable was this exhibition that Captain Maxwell at first feared he had pointed the gun too low, and actually killed the poor mandarin; while the sailors, who were in ecstasies with the sight, exclaimed that the captain had shot away the China Admiral's head.” Nothing so serious as that had taken place, however; but the effect was just the same as if it had, for every Chinese gun was instantly stopped.

So far the Britishers had decidedly scored. But they were not yet out of the fray. A little later that evening the frigate was under way again. She was steered for a narrower part of the estuary known as the Bogue, or the mouth. But the enemy were still on the alert. “The topsails were hardly sheeted home before a flight of rockets, and a signal gun from the fleet, announced that night or day the passage was to be disputed. In the next instant there was a simultaneous flash of light from one end to the other of the batteries . . . sky-rockets were thrown up in every direction, and all the embrasures

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were illuminated in the most brilliant manner." This demonstration instantly brought every man of the frigate's crew to his place. It was plain that the enemy meant no more play.

In fact, the very first shot the enemy now fired told its tale, striking the *Alceste* in the bows, and low down. Soon another well-aimed ball tore away one of the mizen-shrouds, and then went through the spanker. In short, the Chinese began to give a very good account of themselves, and Captain Maxwell says that it really put him in mind of old times again. Still, by the captain's express orders, not a single shot by way of reply was fired by the British. The men were to wait till he gave the signal by himself firing one of the quarter-deck guns. This order must have been galling to the sailors, but the commander had higher game at which he proposed to fly—higher game than the junks arrayed against him. He steered right upon the most formidable of the shore batteries, that of Annanhoy, and waited till he was within less than half a musket shot of it. Then the quarter-deck spoke, and with effect; and instantly the main-deck and forecastle guns followed suit.

The effect on the battery was seen at once. Portions of the works were carried away, and whole ranks of cannon were silenced. The very first broadside brought about a curious and indeed a laughable scene. At once the Chinese defenders rushed in large batches from the spot, each man carrying a paper lantern. It was, of course, dark long before this time. Up the slopes above the battery the Celestials swarmed, each perfectly distinguishable by his little light, till the hillside was covered as if with a multitude of glorified glow-worms. The temptation to the British tars to pick off these con-

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spicuous objects was too severe to be resisted. But the captain was too quick for his men. Springing upon the poop, he called out that not a shot was to be fired at those runaways; that, in fact, they had come to silence the batteries, not to kill as many Chinamen as possible.

Maxwell did not cease his work till the fort of Annan-hoy had been silenced and pretty well knocked to pieces. This done, he sailed on, and presently anchored for the night, undisturbed by either boat or battery. The results were not long in showing themselves; a mandarin of still higher rank came in hot haste from the Canton Viceroy, to say that the *Alceste* might advance as far as her commander pleased; and, moreover, that the *Lyra* might also come, if Captain Maxwell desired to send for her; in short, that as many boats as the British wished might pass the Bogue. The civility now shown was remarkable. An amusing fact was afterwards reported; a special Chop, or proclamation, was, by the Viceroy's orders, posted in Canton itself, to the effect that the *Alceste* had come up by his Excellency's express permission!

And now the British commander did a bold thing; the step he took, in truth, was one of the most dangerous character, if matters should go wrong. Taking with him only four rowers, he travelled in a small boat the thirty and odd miles that lay between the frigate and the city of Canton. None ventured to molest him on his way, and when he landed on the quay he was received with delighted cheers by the handful of folk connected with the British factory. As for the natives, they had crowded to the spot in countless thousands, all bent on seeing what manner of man it was who had thus ventured to brave the whole Chinese Empire. Maxwell stepped along amongst them, regarding them with no more concern than

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he might a field of poppies. His undaunted bearing saved him; had he shown the smallest sign of fear there can be no doubt that he would have been torn to pieces by a howling mob. As it was, one look was sufficient for the Celestials, and in a trice the crowds were scuttling off in all directions. The Chinamen were, in fact, as Captain Hall describes, "in as much amaze as if a tiger from the woods had sprung amongst them."

All this time the *Lyra*, by the commander's orders, was at Typa, a mile or two from Macao, on the south side of the Canton inlet. Hardly had she taken up her position there when a huge Chinese vessel, mounting seven guns, anchored near her. It was by far the largest junk the British crews had ever seen, being four or five times the size of the *Lyra*. Such a neighbour, to say the least of it, was not exactly welcome. But before their surprise had ceased, "another still larger dropped anchor under our stern; presently another took his station on the bow, and one on the quarter, till in the course of half an hour we found ourselves fairly encaged by these immense vessels." One of the Chinamen brought up actually within the *Lyra's* buoy, and things began to assume an ugly aspect. Captain Hall had only ten guns, but they were of much larger calibre than those of the enemy, being, in fact, thirty-two pounders. With these he prepared to show fight, if necessary, and to withstand with his single brig the whole of this great armament. What he would have done had two or three of the huge junks borne down on opposite sides of him he did not know. "The poor *Lyra*," he says, "must have been crushed like an egg-shell." Notwithstanding this, as soon as he was ready for action, Hall sent a request to the nearest of the junks to move farther away, and it was with some relief

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he saw the Chinaman obey. Still the crowd of junks continued to hem in the warship, and every morning and evening there was a great muster of the crews, with much beating of gongs, all no doubt intended to frighten the strangers. Captain Hall, in his account, makes light of it, but his situation must have been in the highest degree dangerous.

All at once, and most unexpectedly on both sides, there came a change. News reached the Chinese crews of what the *Alceste* had done away in the estuary. The effect was extraordinary; in the utmost hurry and confusion they all weighed anchor, and went off pell-mell into the harbour of Macao, where they clustered so close together that the junks actually jostled each other, for all the world like a flock of sheep, says Hall.

Orders from Maxwell reached the *Lyra* in due course she was to join the *Alceste*. On the way Captain Hall was to hold communication with no Chinaman, under any pretence whatever. As soon as the brig began to move, the junks ventured to peep out of their harbour, and to follow at a respectful distance. Presently the Chinese commodore himself proposed to pay a visit to Captain Hall, a visit which the Englishman civilly declined. Not to be put off, however, the commodore had himself rowed alongside, and one of his men, an interpreter, began to climb up the *Lyra's* side, explaining as he did so, that the great mandarin was come "about the ship's pigeon!" Hall was puzzled, and replied that the ship had got no pigeon. He did not then know that "pigeon" was the common Chinese rendering of the English word *business*, and that the expression "pigeon English" means simply *business English*, the language mostly used in mercantile matters out there. By this

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time the commodore himself was seen climbing up the side of the vessel, two or three other men with him, and the captain thought it was time they were stopped.

"Here, my lads," he said to his men, "put this gentleman into his boat again."

"In an instant a couple of strapping fellows, who liked no better sport, leaped up, and would have tumbled the poor Chinese over the gangway in a trice, had I not caught their arms. The interpreter, seeing what was going to happen, made a wise and precipitate retreat, dragging the commander-in-chief along with him by the tail, and screaming to the boatmen to shove off."

Captain Hall, it may be added, was accompanied on his whole passage by an ever-increasing crowd of hostile boats, yet, in spite of several threatenings, none dared to attack him, and he duly joined his superior in command. In the end Lord Amherst embarked on board the *Alceste*, and the two British warships left Chinese waters as conquerors.

CHAPTER XXIII

A WATER-LOGGED TIMBER VESSEL

The *England*, a Newcastle timber vessel—Leaves Quebec—A beautiful aurora borealis—A fearful hurricane—The wheel shattered—Ship full of water—The timber cargo keeps her afloat—Crew take to the rigging—The intense cold—Famine staring the men in the face—A terrible Christmas and New Year—A sail—Jolly-boat in chase, but misses it—Another sail—Boat off again—The boat lost and in a fog—Picked up by a brig—In search of the *England*—Found at last—Landed on one of the Azores.

IT sometimes happens that the cargo of a ship is of such a character that no matter how full the vessel may be of water, it will not sink, so long as its planks hold together; and in such a case the wreck, though unmanageable, may keep afloat for weeks or months, and drift over almost the whole extent of a great ocean. A conspicuous example of this was seen when the *England*, a Newcastle timber vessel, was wrecked in the Atlantic, in the winter of 1835-6.

The *England*, of four hundred tons burden, left Quebec early in November, her destination Greenock. Her cargo consisted entirely of timber, and she had but one passenger. A very nasty snowstorm delayed the vessel for a day in the St. Lawrence, but otherwise the voyage was prosperous enough for the first two or three weeks. In the Gulf of St. Lawrence, however, there was a splendid exhibition of the aurora borealis, the colour a deep red. This the skipper and the mate regarded as the sure pre-

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cursor of very bad weather, beautiful though the spectacle might be. They had never before seen a display where the colour was of such a deep blood-red, and they argued that the coming storm would be one of exceptional severity. The passenger was inclined to smile at all this, when several days passed by without any sign of a storm arising.

But the old salts were right ; presently a strong north-west wind began to blow, rapidly increasing in force till it became at last a hurricane of the most awful description. The fore-topsails were reefed, and two men were placed at the wheel instead of the usual one. To attempt to steer a course was quite out of the question, and all the captain could do was to let the ship drive before the wind. The skipper himself unfortunately was ill, and the management of the *England* fell to the mate. The seas were now tremendous, and the vessel laboured heavily, causing the captain in his cabin great anxiety. To heave-to would be fatal, he and the mate agreed, and the only thing was to let the ship go. The solitary passenger sat by the cabin fire as the darkness closed in, but he was too uneasy to sit for long at a time, and ran up on deck every now and then to see how the weather was. The violence of the tempest increased as the hours passed slowly by.

Suddenly "a tremendous sea broke over the stern of the vessel, carrying destruction before it. The wheel came down with a crash through the cabin sky-light in broken fragments, and in an instant we were in total darkness. The floor of our cabin was almost immediately covered with water, and a scene of horror and confusion ensued which beggars description." The two who had been at the wheel rushed down the companion-ladder, having luckily escaped destruction when the overwhelm-

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ing wave had borne down upon them. They had managed to seize something and hold on for their lives. The rest of the crew likewise speedily tumbled down into the captain's cabin, but he, poor man, could do nothing. For a few moments all was in blackest darkness, but somebody produced dry tinder, and a light was obtained. Then all except the skipper rushed on deck again, to see what was the state of things there, and a terrible state they found it to be; "the hammocks swept overboard, with the greater part of the bulwarks; the water-casks broke loose and going to pieces."

The first step was to lash the helm and keep the ship to; then the pumps were immediately manned and kept at full work, the vessel having been found to be leaking badly. The passenger took his turn with the crew, and the pumping was continued vigorously all night, the men, to their joy, just able to keep the depth of water in the hold from increasing. Morning light revealed more serious damage still; the rudder was smashed and scarce held together. Such a discovery was one to blanch the face of the stoutest man on board. And the case was made far worse by the behaviour of the broken helm, which "kept flapping violently against the stern of the vessel, at every blow breaking and opening the seams of the ship." Before the shattered rudder fell to pieces and dropped into the sea, the damage done was very great. In fact, the water was rushing in torrents through the broken stern of the ship. It was useless to go on pumping now, and it was perfectly impossible to stop the leaks or to repair the broken timbers.

Had the *England's* cargo been anything but timber, or some such buoyant material, her end would have been speedy, and her crew would either have gone down with

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her, or would have been exposed in small boats in the middle of the Atlantic, and that in the winter time. As it was, the men were well aware that though the water might fill her—and that was now only an affair of minutes—she would float, and possibly, if the weather held good, for a considerable time. The story of the wreck of the *England*, accordingly, differs somewhat from those of the ordinary kind. She was not likely to sink just yet, and there was no coast near on which she might be driven. So the crew prepared to do the best they could under the circumstances, namely, to live in the rigging, for the deck would not, except in very calm weather, be available. The ship was already so far down in the water that every tiny wave rolled across her deck. So the men hauled a quantity of provisions, biscuit and pork mainly, and water, up under the mainmast, and snatched what covering they could in the shape of great-coats and blankets. All this had to be done with feverish haste, for the seas were breaking violently over the vessel at every moment, each wave threatening to carry off some unfortunate sailor.

And what a time and place in which to live in the rigging! They were off the bank of Newfoundland, and the weather was intensely cold, with storms and fog frequent, the showers that came being for the most part of snow or sleet. Yet to remain on deck was, as has already been said, utterly out of the question. Before they finally took to the rigging, however, they gave the water free passage into and out of the ship by knocking out the ports at stern and bow. Fortunate were they that they thought of the step, for if the water imprisoned within had burst up the deck, as it speedily would have done had there been no egress, the ship would have fallen



A PRECARIOUS LODGING

The decks were all awash, so the crew hauled up a quantity of provisions under the mainmast, and secured themselves to the rigging.



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to pieces directly, and every soul on board must have perished instantly. Indeed, the narrator states, the displacing of a single log would have been fatal. Here then was a broken ship kept afloat only by her cargo, which might at any moment shift in the rollings and tossings of the barque and consign her to destruction; the vessel, moreover, was untended, and drifting helpless as one of the logs of her own cargo over the stormy ocean; her crew was exposed to the winter storms of those bitter latitudes, and for how long, no man could say! Not a soul on board could have really expected to survive such a desperate situation.

A daily ration of food was agreed upon, a little biscuit and pork, and a small quantity of water. Of this latter the poor fellows could not get half enough, and they were always eager to catch a little whenever it rained. The liquid was dirty and tarry as the sails in which it was caught, but it was as sweetest nectar to the sailors. The cold was even harder to bear than the thirst, if that were possible; no clothing could keep out the winter blasts in mid-Atlantic. It was necessary to move about as much as possible among the masts and cordage, to prevent themselves from freezing stiff. Day by day, and night after night, the unfortunate sailors clung to the rigging, for the most part closely lashed to it, the ship meanwhile drifting they knew not whither. Not a sail appeared on the horizon. Two or three nights after the wreck the passenger had a heavy misfortune. He had fastened his topcoat with a piece of yarn to the mast to dry, for the garments were nearly always wet with the spray or with the leaping waves. When next he opened his eyes, the coat was gone, and he turned suddenly to see where it had dropped. Unluckily he let go his

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blanket, and in an instant the wind had whisked it after the overcoat into the sea. So strong was the breeze oftentimes that even the men themselves would have been blown into the tossing waves had they not been lashed securely.

The poor fellow would certainly have lost his life through exposure had the vessel kept in those northern latitudes. But soon a fresh north-westerly breeze sprang up, and the water-logged wreck was carried every day farther south. Not that much alleviation of the men's lot was observable at once; it was the thought of the better climate that was coming which at that time buoyed them up. For many days their plight was wretched in the extreme. This is how the passenger describes the nights spent aloft. "The sleep we enjoyed in our insecure berth in the rigging was neither sound nor refreshing, but we were thankful for it; it passed the time, and no doubt was of some benefit to us. It was a kind of dog-sleep, and only lasted from fifteen minutes to half an hour at a time, and was generally disturbed with dreams about our friends and far-distant homes, which we had little or no expectation of ever seeing again. Sometimes we awoke in a dreadful fright, dreaming we were pitched overboard, and some of the monsters of the deep ready to snatch us in their terrible maws. When we opened our eyes, it was, alas! to perceive the signs of famine or a watery grave."

The weather on the whole grew milder, though every now and then there were gales and even thunderstorms. The question of food and water began to give the unfortunate sailors pressing concern. As yet not a single sail had been seen, and no man could venture, even in his most sanguine moments, to set a limit to the time their

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stay on the wreck might last. They cut themselves down to the smallest quantity of nourishment that would at all serve to keep body and soul together, two or three ounces of wet and mouldy bread, and half a pint of water per day. On Christmas Day, however—they had now been a whole month in the rigging!—they gave themselves a little treat, an extra slice of pork! Like many of the old sailing ships, and not a few of the newer steamers, for that matter, the *England* swarmed with rats. At first the sailors had flung the animals overboard whenever they had caught any; now, each little rodent was kept, and was esteemed a marvellous luxury. Luckily a quadrant had been saved, and the master reckoned that the ship was now in the latitude of the Azores, though whether to the west or to the east of the group, he did not know.

A few nights after Christmas the shipwrecked crew were thrown into a state of excitement by the sight of a sail in the distance, and at once six of them went off in the jolly-boat to give chase, their companions sending them away with a rousing cheer. It was not much in the way of food and water the ship could spare these adventurous fellows, but they went in high hopes of success. The rest promised to keep torches flaring at night time, so that in the event of the boat missing the barque that was being chased, the men might at least find their way back to the *England*. The torches the crew made out of lengths of thickly tarred rope. After an interval of many hours, the brave six returned in the middle of the night to the ship, almost dead with exhaustion. They had got within a little distance of the stranger vessel, they reported, when she had suddenly spread her sails and made off, leaving the pursuers hope-

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lessly behind. This first attempt had proved such an entire failure that it was determined no more should be made till there was practically a certainty of success.

New Year's Day, coming just after this ill-success, and after so long a period of exposure and privation, was a most miserable day for the shipwrecked sailors, and they were in a state of the utmost despondency. However, they had done their best to usher it in with due solemnity, having, at midnight, lighted the lantern in the rigging, and sung a psalm. After that the men shook hands with each other, and gave utterance to mutual good wishes for the coming year, wishes that must have seemed almost like a mockery under the circumstances. But the weather was much finer and warmer now, and, in spite of the water-logged ship beneath them, and of their forlorn position on the vast waste of waters, they managed, lashed to the rigging, to get a little refreshing sleep.

Next day, January 2nd, brought another sensation. A vessel was seen in the distance, and though the men had declared on the former occasion that they would not leave the ship again without a reasonable certainty of success, they were all eager to try their luck once more. Without waiting to make signals, as they had done before, the boat's crew set off at once. "There was no cheering this time when we parted; we were in too melancholy and uncertain a state for this expression of joy and triumph, so pleasing and natural to seamen. We spent the night keeping up torch-lights, expecting in the morning to see the vessel approaching us, or at least the boat in view; but alas! there was not a speck seen in the horizon; both vessel and boat were out of sight.

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This was a painful result to our expectations, and our sole hope was, that the men had been rescued, though we could not well see how; and we had the consolatory prospect of being able to stand it out a little longer, by keeping ourselves still on the same allowance."

The next day passed without a sight of either ship or boat. Those left on the *England* took the opportunity of inspecting their provisions, and found that by reducing the daily allowance to the least that would sustain life at all, they had enough for ten or twelve days more. If by the end of that period they should not have been rescued, or at least relieved, there was before them nothing but death by starvation. It was an appalling prospect, and from this day more than one of the men began to turn his thoughts at times to that which sailors in the like extremity have occasionally done, the sacrificing of one of their number for the sustenance of the rest, a terrible step even to contemplate. But no one of them as yet ventured to whisper a word of this to his fellow-sufferers.

It is now time to turn to the plucky sailors away in the jolly-boat. They rowed all night—it was Saturday night—after the vessel for which they were making. Sunday morning came, but only to reveal to them how desperate their situation was. Not only had they lost sight of the ship they had been chasing, but they could see no sign of their own. They had, in fact, lost sight of the *England* early in the night, in spite of the torches constantly burning there. Here were these six poor fellows lost on the boundless Atlantic, with hardly any food or drink, and in a small skiff, a dreadful situation. They could do nothing but drift at the will of the winds and waves, and their case was rendered still more desperate by the pall of

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fog that covered everything. By the end of the next day their stock of food was finished. But when things get to the worst, says the old adage, they must mend. And things had got into about as bad a state as they well could do with these poor fellows.

The following day the fog cleared off, and to their unspeakable joy they descried a brig not far away. The ship at once bore down upon them, having observed their signals. An hour and a half passed, the brig reached them, and the shipwrecked mariners were hoisted on board of her. The vessel proved to be the *Blucher*, bound for Buenos Ayres. She was nearly a thousand miles out of her proper course, the winds having of late been fierce and contrary. The skipper informed the rescued men that the spot was some three or four hundred miles from the nearest of the Azores, Fayal, which lay in a north-easterly direction. Thus the *England's* men knew that between Saturday and Monday their boat had been rowed or had drifted no less a distance than a hundred and forty miles. The *Blucher* was an American vessel, and the skipper and his crew did everything in their power for the miserable sailors. The captain did more: he expressed his readiness to sacrifice the time and go in search of the missing timber vessel.

For three days did the search go on, and on Thursday, January 7th, they fell in with the *England*. The passenger shall tell of the meeting in his own words. "Towards evening, and while trying to gather water, it being rainy, the carpenter went to the fore-top, and immediately descried a brig to leeward; he watched her attentively, and observed that she put about. He now cried to us, and told us she was standing towards us, for there was sufficient light for her to see us. No one can

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picture the joy we now felt for this prospect of deliverance ; it can be but faintly imagined. At twelve o'clock, midnight, the vessel was alongside of us, and we were soon taken aboard. . . . Our happiness was increased by finding our fellow-sufferers with whom we had parted a few days ago, and who were ready to welcome us on deck." It was truly, as the passenger declares, an extraordinary deliverance.

The American captain now proceeded to the Azores, far out of his way though it was, in order to put the shipwrecked ashore there. He stood first for Fayal, but the state of the wind did not admit of his landing. Accordingly he steered for the small neighbour island of Pico, and there sent off the poor fellows in their own boats, which had been brought along. "We bade our deliverers farewell, wishing them every blessing, and in about an hour we were landed at the foot of the Peak of Pico, a very lofty extinct volcanic mountain, covered nearly two-thirds of the way up with vines, orange, lemon, and fig trees, while the top, or crater, is crowned with eternal snow." On the kindness shown by the people of Pico, and on the passage to England which the shipwrecked crew were able subsequently to obtain, it is not needful to dwell at length.

In some respects the loss of the *England* is one of the most remarkable in the history of shipwrecks. That a shattered vessel, full of water, should have lived through the winds and storms of the winter season, to drift in wayward fashion from Newfoundland to the Azores, a distance in a direct line of a thousand or twelve hundred miles ; that the crew should have existed for the long period of forty-five days lashed to the rigging, with little or no protection against the piercing wind and driving

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rain and sleet, and with only the barest allowance daily of food and water that would keep life in them ; that after all this, they should be rescued, and should finally reach home without the loss of a single man—all this was truly extraordinary.

CHAPTER XXIV

A HURRICANE IN A TROPICAL SEA

Mr. Caunter, an English clergyman—Takes ship at Calcutta for Madras—A forbidding-looking skipper—Fishing for sharks—A storm brewing—The Lascar sailors become useless—Gun breaks loose—Loosens a heavy drip-stone—The mate lassoes the gun—A fearful sea on board—Lady swept out of her cabin—The skipper to the rescue—A night alarm for the clergyman—Up to his shoulders and clinging for life—Ship full of water—Ports opened—Water escapes, and the ship rights herself—Skulking Lascars—A rope's-end argument—Storm abates—Off Madras—A heavy surf—A boat turns a somersault—All saved.

ONE of the English travellers in and about India, in the first half of the nineteenth century, was a clergyman, the Reverend H. Caunter, who has left us many lively and amusing, and sometimes most thrilling, descriptions of his experiences and of scenes of which he was a witness in Eastern lands. On one occasion he took ship from Calcutta, along the Orissa and Coromandel coasts, to Madras. It was, indeed, only a coasting vessel in which he took passage, but a fine specimen of its class, a teak-built craft of six hundred tons burden. He and a few travelling friends were the only passengers, with the exception of one lady. The recent monsoon had quite passed away, and there was no reason to expect anything but a favourable passage.

Mr. Caunter himself occupied a small cabin under the

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poop, and near the cuddy. The crew consisted mainly of Lascars, of whom there were thirty; in fact, with the exception of the captain and his first and second mates, there were no whites in the ship's company. The skipper was a very great favourite with his crew, and he was, in truth, a good seaman and a kindly fellow. But his appearance was certainly not such as to prepossess the passengers in his favour. He was "an old weather-beaten seaman who had lost an eye, over which he wore a black patch, that gave a fierceness to the expression of his countenance, naturally rough and grim, by no means conciliating. He was, besides, deeply seamed with the smallpox, which imparted to his broad, rigid features an asperity that repelled courtesy, and rendered him at first unpopular among his passengers." The man had a rough crust, but it was only a crust.

The voyage down the Hooghly and through the Sunderbunds provided nothing particularly exciting. But the entrance into the open sea brought the diversion of fishing for sharks. The passengers baited a hook and threw it over the side of the vessel. Almost immediately they had the satisfaction of seeing it swallowed by a particularly voracious shark. The brute pulled and tugged desperately, and in spite of all the skill with which he was played, he succeeded in breaking the rope. It parted suddenly with a snap, and away went the fish, carrying the hook with him. Fresh tackle was procured, much stronger than the first, and another try was made. To the surprise of the sportsmen, the same fish before long seized the bait, swallowing it and the hook entirely; it was evident that the shark had kept quite close to the ship in the interval. Again the fish made a stout fight of it, and it was some time before he could be hauled in and

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got on deck. At last he was secured, and a fine fellow he proved to be, measuring not far short of twenty feet in length. The first hook was found in his throat; the second, with the rope still attached, was securely fastened deep down in the stomach. The shark gave those on board a lively time of it for a while. "Its strength was prodigious, and so furiously did it lash the deck with its tail, as to render it dangerous to approach within its sweep. With a single stroke it overturned one of the guns; the carpenter then severed the dangerous member with the blow of an axe; after which the savage creature was quickly despatched." Like others of its breed, this shark was evidently a most voracious brute, for from its stomach was taken a piece of solid timber as thick as a man's arm and thirteen inches long.

Hardly had the barque got fairly into the Bay of Bengal when the skipper began to scent a coming storm. The air seemed to have become actually stagnant; not a capful of wind was to be had; the sultry heat grew almost unendurable, and everybody spent a wretched night. Morning brought a change; a fine spanking breeze was blowing. But the captain did not like the look of it, and had all sails reefed, as he declared a storm to be rapidly approaching. The sun was half hidden by haze, and cast a curious glare as of brass over the sea. So far as the passengers were concerned, they saw nothing alarming in all this, but the bluff skipper was of a very different opinion, and made all haste with his preparations to meet the gale. A curious thing was now seen, but one often found in cases of this sort. The Lascars grew suddenly lazy, or rather, indifferent, and went about their work as if half asleep, but with faces showing the utmost uneasiness and consternation. Apparently

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the men, now that they were certain they were in for a bad time, did not care what happened; the fatalism of the East held them in its grasp. It was clear that the three white men of the crew would have to depend upon themselves in the coming emergencies, whatever they might be.

For an hour or two the passengers sat on deck and tried, with faces as unconcerned as they could make them, to kill time. But the startling and most unusual appearance the sky assumed, and the predictions of the captain, gradually produced their results; everybody grew grave and showed signs of inward fear. Stronger blew the gale, and the vessel began to roll ominously, giving sudden lurches that terrified the passengers already, especially the lady. The clouds by this time covered the sky, rolling "in dark misshapen masses, appearing at intervals as if they had been torn asunder by the wind and scattered in gigantic fragments through the troubled air." The afternoon wore on, till, by four o'clock, the ship was staggering under a furious hurricane, her sails all close-reefed, her ports fastened down, and her guns all brought upon the quarter-deck and well lashed. The skipper had done everything in his power for the safety of the vessel and those in her.

The passengers went into the cuddy for tea, but were full of apprehension. In the middle of the meal, the vessel "appeared of a sudden to leap over a gigantic billow, and the moment she had recovered her equilibrium, she rolled so heavily that her bulwarks were nearly under water. The tables were forced from their stays, overturned, and all the tea-things shattered to pieces; we were thrown from our chairs, and for a minute or two the utmost confusion prevailed."



A RISKY ATTEMPT

During the hurricane a heavy gun broke loose, and crashed from side to side, until the plucky mate managed to snare it with a rope, and secured it to the capstan.



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While this lively scene was witnessed in the cuddy, there were still livelier doings on the quarter-deck. The violent lurchings of the vessel caused one of the guns to break loose from its lashings, and the heavy piece with its carriage began to roll from side to side of the ship with every motion. It was a dangerous customer to have careering about the deck at will, and the men expected every instant to see the bulwarks carried away, or some other serious damage done. There was positive danger even to the ship itself. The Lascar seamen were in deadly terror, and dared not come near the spot, much less make any attempt to secure the dangerous piece of ordnance. "In one of its furious migrations, it struck a dripstone, which had been secured in a corner near the cabins, released it from the strong wooden case in which it was confined, and sent it bounding upon the deck, placing in great peril those who were engaged in the necessary duties of the ship. The noise occasioned by these huge masses dashing from side to side, added to the howling of the wind and the fierce lashing of the waters, was painful in the extreme."

The second officer lost no time in preparing a noose, with which he approached the spot, whence every Lascar had fled in mortal terror. After a few attempts, all made under the greatest risk, the plucky mate managed to snare the gun, and quick as thought he took a turn round the capstan with the other end of the rope. The cannon being now secure, he gave his attention to the dripstone, and soon made that safe too. As for the Lascars, they had grown more apathetic than ever, having evidently made up their minds that their time had come, and that it was useless to struggle against fate. Had there been

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no better men on board, the vessel would soon have gone hopelessly to destruction.

Night came on, the hurricane more furious than ever. All the passengers went to bed except the clergyman, Mr. Caunter, and he stayed on deck with the captain. The skipper was clearly very ill at ease, and was gradually becoming more apprehensive, if not actually nervous. The passenger could not help noticing the man's twitching features, his flushed face, his unquiet gaze, his impulsive eagerness. Ever and anon, as the captain stood by the man at the wheel, he would suddenly clutch at the spokes in his perturbation. Mr. Caunter did not like the look of it at all, and began to have his doubts whether the man was capable of managing the ship in such a tempest. However, he sat down on a gun, to which he had to cling with both hands, and smoked a cigar, the howling of the storm preventing conversation with the skipper, except in occasional snatches. All the while the vessel was labouring fearfully.

Suddenly there came a tremendous sea, striking the vessel astern, but on the quarter. "In an instant it carried away the quarter-gallery on that side, swamping the cabin into which the poor lady passenger had retired for the night. The force of the water was so great that it dashed open the door of the cabin." The lady was swept out by the furious onslaught of the water, and carried headlong into the cuddy not far away. The captain was on the spot in a moment, and seized the poor creature before any further harm could come to her. She was, of course, dripping; she was almost in convulsions with the fright, "her eye upturned with a deep settled glare of half-consciousness, that seemed as if her mind were in a state between terror and agony, to neither

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of which she could give expression, as the water had nearly suffocated her. The blood had receded from her cheeks, which were overspread with a dull bluish white. In a few moments she recovered her breath, when she shrieked and fainted." The skipper at once gave up his own cabin to the unfortunate lady, and she gradually recovered. The carpenter had meanwhile been nailing planks across the breach made by the sweeping away of the quarter-gallery, covering the boards with a piece of strong tarpaulin.

The clergyman now went to bed, though it was long before he could get a wink of sleep, what with the howling of the wind, the roar of the waves, the labouring of the vessel, and the dread sense of peril. He was in the middle of a horrible dream when he was suddenly roused by his cot, which, instead of swinging as it did in a normal state of things, had become fixed. The passenger found afterwards that it had really stuck fast against the roof of his cabin. But he knew nothing of that at the time, and instantly believed that the ship was sinking beneath the waves. In an agony of fright he sprang out on the floor. There was a fearful noise on deck, and Mr. Caunter, almost frantic now, made a dash for the cuddy, just as he was, in his night-gear. He had scarcely opened the cuddy door when a gigantic billow poured over the bow of the ship, hissing and sparkling in the impeded moonlight, "and I stood upon the quarter-deck up to my shoulders in water. I clung for an instant to the ladder of the poop, which, as soon as I could recover myself, I ascended. Here I witnessed a scene which I shall never forget to the latest moment of my existence."

He had come on deck at a critical time. Round the

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ship the sea raged in mad fury, while the flashes of lightning came so quickly one after another that they may be said to have been continuous. And so vivid were they that they illuminated the whole visible stretch of the ocean with a light as that of high noontide. Mr. Caunter was obliged to cling for his life to the rail, while the terrific roar of the hurricane deafened and confounded him till he was almost too dazed to observe what was passing. As for the ship herself, she appeared to be absolutely "buried in the billows." She had shipped no less than five tremendous seas, yet none of the water could escape, the captain, as has been already stated, having long ago had every port fastened down. The clergyman was enough of a sailor to be aware that such a state of things could not last, and he was not surprised when the skipper shouted at the top of his voice that they were going down. The vessel was on her beam-ends.

Shuddering, Mr. Caunter listened to the man's frantic shouts. The captain raved and stormed about the deck like one demented, and the vessel lay a mere log, her helm of not the slightest use. True, she was floating, but almost under water, and swept every minute by fearful seas, each of which in its turn seemed about to swamp her entirely. The billows rose like mountains upon her, breaking in mighty volumes over her, and for the moment burying her beneath tons upon tons of hissing yeasty brine. The clergyman sat with his back to and leaning against the mizen-mast, quite stunned by the awful scene and the fearful danger ever present. In truth, he no longer had any clear perception of things, and had lost all fear of death, though death appeared to be both inevitable and close upon them all. He declares that had

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the vessel sunk then, he would have gone to the bottom quite oblivious of what was happening.

All this passed in the course of a few score seconds, during which the ship, full of water, and almost altogether beneath the surface, hung, as it were, between safety and destruction.

“Cut the lashings of all the ports to leeward—instantly!” yelled the skipper, and the few men capable of action rushed to obey the order.

A short period of suspense ensued, during which the clergyman holding on by the mizen-mast was becoming ever more stupefied. Then, heard distinctly above all the roar of the hurricane, came the words, “Ports all clear, sir!”

The effect was seen in a moment. Immediately the lashings were cut the ports were forced open by the tremendous pressure within and behind them. Then the water gushed out with fury, and in half a minute the deck was left free. At once the vessel righted herself, as if by magic, and for the present the worst of the danger was over. The marvellous change that now came over the skipper’s face did not escape the eyes of the passenger, himself now once more alive and observant.

The ship was put before the wind, and in spite of running under bare poles, dashed along at the rate of ten knots an hour, so full of fury was the gale behind her. The lightning gradually ceased, but the wind did not show the slightest sign of dropping. The clouds above still looked dark and forbidding, but every now and then the light burst through between the dense masses and flooded the heaving, roaring ocean with light.

The mate now began to look up the Lascar sailors, who had for some time been invisible. Presently these

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scared fellows were all found prone and huddled together in the bottom of the ship's boat, which hung between the fore and the main masts. No argument in the shape of spoken words could induce the men to budge an inch; they were still of opinion that the ship and all in her were going to the bottom. Then the chief officer had recourse to the sort of persuasion that alone seemed to prevail with the Lascars. Seizing a rope's end, the mate laid about him in lusty style, and as he was a big, muscular fellow, the blows were none of the lightest. Yet it was not till he had made long and vigorous application that he got the sailors out of their skulking-place and off to their posts. As there were close on thirty men to be dealt with, the scene must have been lively, if a trifle monotonous towards the end.

All this time the parson remained on deck, still dressed in nothing but his night-clothes, and those, of course, drenched through and through; though exposed to the full fury of the storm, he could not tear himself away from the deck. He was not in the least cold or uncomfortable; on the contrary, he says, "the excitement from utter helplessness to the apparent certainty of escape from threatened destruction, produced a glow all over my body, and I continued upon deck, amid the rush of waters and the roar of elements, without the least desire to return to my cabin." So he seated himself by the officer of the watch, who regaled him with the most terrible tales of disasters at sea, till at last the passenger grew weary, and went off and enjoyed a few hours of refreshing sleep. When he arose in the morning, the storm had almost blown itself out, and in due course Madras was reached.

There was now the landing to come, always a difficult

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piece of business on that surf-bound shore, as is well known. At once there were any number of small boats alongside, to take off the passengers from this and another ship which had just dropped anchor hard by. Though the day was fine, and the breeze had now become moderate, the surf ran very high. There was, besides, a boisterous and difficult cross swell, which made the passage to shore more than ordinarily risky that day. However, with a good deal of trouble the people were got into the boats, and the voyage to shore began, a crowd of catamarans following close, to pick up any person or any bit of baggage that might be tossed into the frothing sea. The ground-swell, always strong on that coast, was particularly heavy. Mr. Caunter's boat was fortunate enough to survive all risks, and all the tossings and buffetings of the surf, and he was safely landed. He stood on the beach to watch the fortunes of the other boats, and was presently witness of an accident that might easily have ended fatally. In this case there might have been some mismanagement; anyhow, "the man at the helm had allowed her to advance too far upon the crest of the breaker, which curled suddenly under her, raised her stern in the air, when another surge instantly succeeding turned her a complete somersault, stern over head, and sent every person within her sprawling in the surf. They were whirled about in the most violent manner, performing many disagreeable evolutions, their mouths filled with water and sand, until rescued from their jeopardy by the men who followed in the catamarans, and plucked them from the rapacious jaws of the sharks within a very few seconds after the disaster. They presented a sorry picture as they stood upon the beach, dripping, and wiping their faces, when

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they were beyond the reach of danger. The whole of their baggage was recovered from the impetuous waters. After having liberally rewarded the active fellows who had saved them from a watery death, they proceeded, like ourselves, in palenkeens towards the town."

CHAPTER XXV

BRITISH WARSHIPS IN RUSSIAN SEAS

The combined British and French navies in the Crimean War—A terrific storm—The chief theatres of the naval operations—A little British gunboat chases three Russian ships—A queer floating battery—British and French sailors fraternise—Guns hurled into the sea—A blaze of forts—A plucky inventor—Russian ships after the fall of Sebastopol—Preparations to destroy—Britishers at work in the dark—A big Russian anchors close to the spot—“We are going to catch it!”—All the Russian ships fired by themselves—Except one, and that is scuttled—A demonstration before Odessa—Reconnoitring the Bug estuary—Dutch courage—A puff of white smoke—A lively time.

IT is probable that up to that time by far the most formidable array of battleships ever seen was that of the combined French and English fleets in the Black Sea, during the Crimean War of 1854-5. Says Dr. Russell, the famous war correspondent, speaking of the squadrons before Odessa, “the fleet must have presented a spectacle full of grandeur and menace to the Odessans. It extended for a space of five miles in front of their town—a dense array of hulls and masts, yards and rigging, which, from the shore, looked as if it were one unbroken network of ships resting on the water. The nine line-of-battle ships towered aloft in the centre, and the heavy steamers, gunboats, bomb-vessels, and transports, to the number of sixty, filled up the intervals,

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and extended along the flanks of the flotilla." And he asks what some of the mighty admirals of yore would have thought of such an armament.

Of course the warships had their share of storms and hurricanes out there; indeed, the story of the naval operations in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov is full of accounts of tempests, some of them of the most terrible kind. Quite early in the war the correspondent came in for a trying experience of this description. He happened to be spending the evening with the captain of the *Jason*, lying outside the harbour of Balaklava, in the Crimean peninsula. The ship was a splendid steamer and splendidly equipped and managed, yet when the storm came on, which it did so suddenly that Dr. Russell could not get back to shore, he wished himself almost anywhere else in the world than on board the *Jason*. The gale set full into the bay, and presently the seas were so tremendous that they "rushed up the precipices in masses of water and foam, astonishing by their force and fury." The captains, not only of the *Jason*, but of the *Agamemnon* and other battleships there, had at once to leave their anchorage, the strain on the cables being too great, and steam gently against the wind. Farther away were a number of small vessels, and amongst these there was appalling work. In a short time they "were dashed into fragments against those cruel rocks, the aspect of which was calculated to thrill the heart of the boldest seaman with horror. There were few which did not drag their anchors and draw towards the iron coast which lowered with death on its brow upon us. Guns of distress boomed through the storm, and flashes of musketry pointed out for a moment a helpless transport which seemed tossing in the very centre of the

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creaming foam of those stupendous breakers, the like of which I never beheld, except once, when I saw the Atlantic running riot against the cliffs of Moher." Luckily the *Jason* rode out the storm till the gale abated, or rather, till it left the sea, and, with redoubled fury, bore down on the land as a hurricane, causing enormous damage to the military camps there.

The chief theatres of the naval operations of this war were three, and each furnished numberless striking incidents and thrilling spectacles. There was, first, the Crimea itself, the principal places being off Balaklava and the marvellous fortress of Sebastopol. Then came a great expedition against Kertch and Yenikale and the shipping of the Sea of Azov. Later on the fleets were sent against Odessa, Kinburn, and other ports about the Dnieper and Bug estuary.

Kertch and Yenikale protect the entrance to the Sea of Azov, from whose ports Russia drew immense supplies of corn and other provisions. To stop the bringing of these supplies was the main object of the allied French and British fleets on this occasion. As soon as the ships appeared in the neighbourhood of the Straits of Yenikale, the Russians on shore began to blow up their magazines one after another in quick succession, a strange sight to those on board the vessels. Some of the explosions were truly awful, "seeming to shake sea and air." Then the Russians could be perceived making their escape across the hills behind Kertch. Now began an exciting time. A Russian steamer was observed stealing out of the Bay of Kertch and making for the Straits of Yenikale. Then a couple of merchantmen also ran out and hastened after the steamer. At once a British gunboat dashed after the retreating enemy. At that moment a huge Russian war-

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ship was seen steaming at a great rate from the direction of the straits, her intention being plainly to support the three craft that were trying to escape. The contrast between the big Russian and the little British gunboat was ludicrous, and no doubt the former mightily despised her tiny opponent. Nothing daunted, the British captain held on, passing one of the merchantmen, giving her a shot to cause her to heave-to. Then on the little bark flew, now within range of the Kertch guns, and within a short distance also of the escaping vessels.

“The forts at Kertch instantly opened, shot after shot splashed up the water near the gunboat, which intrepidly kept on her way. As the man-of-war schooner ran down towards the Russian steamer, the latter gained courage, slackened her speed, and lay-to, as if to engage her enemy. A sheet of flame and smoke rushed from the gunboat’s sides, and her shot flying over the Russian, tossed up a pillar of water far beyond her. Alarmed at this taste of her opponent’s quality and intimation of her armament, the Russian took flight, and the schooner wore away for Yenikale again, with the gunboat after both of them. Off the narrow straits between Yenikale and the sandbank, as the English gunboat, which had been joined by another, ran towards them, a Russian battery opened upon her from the town. The gunboats still dashed at their enemies, which tacked, wore, and ran in all directions, as a couple of hawks would harry a flock of hares.”

The British admiral now sent some light steamers to help the gallant gunboats, and the French also dispatched their contingent of vessels. It was necessary that they should be all of light draught, for the straits abound in shallows. In fact, the navigation through the Yenikale

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passage into the Azov Sea is very intricate and dangerous. The combined squadron thus sent commenced operations against the shore batteries, of which there were a great number. There, in the muddy current which flows out from the inner sea through the straits at the rate of three miles an hour, the Allies poured forth their storm of shot and shell. For a time it was an exciting scene, but it did not last long. First one, then another of the Russian batteries was silenced, its defenders beating a hasty retreat afterwards. But in every case they blew up their magazine before they fled, an almost invariable practice with the Russians, and one which, as will be seen later on, was carried out on a colossal scale after the fall of Sebastopol. The great fort at Yenikale itself was one of those fired and deserted, and the bombarding gunboats were then able to approach the shallow shore. There, moored off the fort, were found two of the enemy's gunboats, with a floating battery close by. This latter was a curious construction, its floor almost even with the water. This battery mounted two guns, both quite uncovered. One Russian was found dead by the side of his gun. He still held the match in his hand, having evidently been about to fire when he was struck down by a shot from the attacking gunboats.

The scene that evening, after the Kertch forts also had been silenced, must have been striking. It was about half-past six when the Russians gave up the struggle and abandoned the town. "Dark pillars of smoke, tinged at the base with flame, began to shoot up all over the hill-sides. Some of them rose from the government houses and stores of Ambalaki, where we landed; others from the stores which the Russians destroyed in their flight. Constant explosions shook the air, and single guns sounded

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here and there continuously throughout the night. Here a ship lay blazing on a sandbank ; there a farm-house in flames lighted up the sky, and obscured the pale moon with volumes of inky smoke." Kertch was a very important naval station, and its dockyard was found to be crammed with military and naval stores of all descriptions. But the Allies intended that the place should no longer be used as an arsenal, and orders were given to destroy it and its magazines. The British Jack-tar fraternised with his French comrade, and the work of destruction was carried rapidly on, the sailors enjoying the job like overgrown schoolboys. Some of them enjoyed still more, perhaps, the opportunities of looting. So "the French hurled guns into the sea, tore up platforms, and exploded the shells found in the magazines. Parties of boats were sent out in all directions to secure and burn prizes, to fire the storehouses and huts on the sandbanks ; by day the sky was streaked with lines of smoke, and by night the air was illuminated by the blaze of forts, houses, magazines, and vessels aground on the flats for miles around us."

While all this was going on in and about the Straits, a squadron was hard at work in the Sea of Azov, under Captain Lyons. No fewer than two hundred and forty-five vessels were destroyed, some of them splendid ships of large size. Towns were shelled, and stores to an incredible amount recklessly destroyed. Of flour alone millions of pounds in weight were needlessly sacrificed. A curious innovation, most gallantly worked by its inventor, Lieutenant Coles, of the Royal Navy, was brought into operation against the town of Taganrog, where the water was much too shallow to permit of the approach of vessels of any size. This ingenious and

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heroic officer took a raft, placed a gun on it, and defended it with gabions, thus forming a floating battery. He named it the *Lady Nancy*, and with this he went against the town. He was able to work his invention with enormous effect against the place, and from this germ, as it were, sprang the "idea of the *Monitor*," which "has revolutionised the navies of the world."

After the memorable fall of Sebastopol, the Allies determined to blow up the Russian steamers that still remained intact, in spite of all that had been done against them. Some of these were famous craft, particularly the magnificent *Vladimir*, and all had done, from time to time, great damage to both the shipping and the shore stations of the allied armies. Another of the terrific storms so frequent in those seas came on, and for a time stopped the operations. At length the attack began. Some of the guns captured from the Russians were turned against their ships. Amongst other things, a battery was ordered to be constructed close to the water's edge, so as to get a nearer range. There lay the enemy's vessels in the roads, not far away, while in the darkness of the night the British worked at parapet and gabions, not a word being uttered or an unnecessary sound made. Covering the working party was a force of one hundred and twenty men, and there were, besides, French sentries posted and keeping a sharp look-out. Presently one of the enemy's warships was observed to glide away from her anchorage, and, though the night was dark, she could be perceived slowly dropping down upon the very place where the work was going on. Closer and closer came the man-of-war, and the workers naturally expected every minute to be swept down by a storm of grape and canister. It was a post of extreme

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danger which these fellows occupied. With one accord they threw themselves flat on the ground and waited. The steamer is within a hundred yards of them; her anchor goes with a splash into the water; the cable can be heard rattling through the hawsehole. Now they are "going to catch it"!

To the intense surprise of the Britishers, sailors and soldiers, the Russian made no further movement, but apparently settled herself comfortably in her new berth. The men on shore, still lying flat, watched and waited. An hour thus passed by. Then all at once a glare was perceived on the vessel, and, a second later, another ship showed a similar flare. "Then one! two! three! four! five! as though from signal guns, the remaining steamers, with one exception, emitted jets of fire. The jets soon became columns of flame and smoke—the wind blew fresh and strong, so the fire soon spread with rapidity, and lighted up the whole of the heavens. The masts were speedily licked and warmed into a fiery glow, and the rigging burst out into fitful wavering lines of light, struggling with the wind for life; the yards shed lambent showers of sparks and burning splinters upon the waters. The northern works could be readily traced by the light of the conflagration, and the faces of the Russian soldiers and sailors who were scattered about on the face of the cliff shone out now and again. The vessels were soon nothing but huge arks of blinding light, which hissed and crackled fiercely, and threw up clouds of sparks and embers; the guns, as they became hot, exploded, and shook the crazy hull to atoms. One after another they went down into the seething waters." What a scene! And what a position at first for the Britishers lying prone on their partly constructed earthworks!

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Day at length broke, revealing a solitary Russian battle-ship, which alone could speedily have annihilated the workers. But her time was likewise come. A boat pushed off from her carrying the last handful of the crew. "Very speedily the vessel began to be seized with a sort of internal convulsion—first she dipped her bows, then her stern, then gave a few uneasy shakes, and at length, after a short quiver, went down bodily, cleverly scuttled." Thus did the Russians destroy their whole fleet before Sebastopol, to prevent the foe from rejoicing over their own destructive work upon it.

A grand combined expedition of British and French naval forces steamed for the famous and most important city of Odessa, but, as it did not appear at all likely that the place could be taken, the fleet, after making an imposing demonstration before the town, moved away to the attack on Kinburn, a port at the mouth of the estuary formed by the confluence of the rivers Dnieper and Bug. While the mortar-vessels and the floating batteries were getting up steam, some of the Frenchmen landed near a ruined village not far from the town. Taking advantage of a broken wall, the French brought into action a couple of field-pieces, the enemy answering briskly from the Kinburn forts. Now the floating batteries moved away from the rest of the vessels, and calmly advanced till they were right under the Russian forts. A brisk and stirring engagement then commenced. The floating batteries opened with "a magnificent crash," one of the craft particularly conspicuous by the vigour and determination of its action. Then the bomb-ketches began, and, as the enemy replied briskly, there was a stirring spectacle. After a while it was seen that the attacking guns had set fire to the fort, and the blaze, fanned by the breeze,

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rapidly spread. Nevertheless, the defenders stuck manfully to their guns, till they were fairly driven away by the fire. Then one explosion after another rent the air, and the Russian flag was shot down. While the conflagration raged and ran over the place, the attack from without became still more deadly, the British ships *Hannibal* and *Valorous*, with the French *Asmodée*, delivering telling broadsides. Here was a fort ablaze almost from end to end, and subject to the combined destructive powers of gunboats, mortar-ships, floating batteries, bomb-ketches, not to mention the great line-of-battle ships. Kinburn could not stand against so fearful an onset, and in due course every gun was silenced save one. This was in charge of a young Polish officer, who with splendid but foolish courage—backed up, the war correspondent humorously remarks, by its Dutch ally—continued to fight, declaring that he and his men could hold out for a week. “What then?” asked the Governor, as well he might. Soon a couple of boats were seen putting off from the shore with a flag of truce. The place at once fell into the hands of the Allies.

Another company of British gunboats, under the command of Admiral Stewart, entered the estuary of the Bug, really a not inconsiderable arm of the sea, to reconnoitre. The cliffs were lofty, and at one place the officers were just saying to each other, “Well! I wonder the Russians have not got a battery on that cliff!” when suddenly there was a puff of white smoke seen there, and a shot struck the water close to the *Grinder*.

“Tell *Grinder* he may send a shot in reply,” said the Admiral, and the little vessel at once replied with

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a will, managing, however, to get into everybody's way, especially into the way of the Admiral's ship *Stromboli*.

Meanwhile the enemy peppered away from the top of the cliff, and, to the huge delight of the British tars, the order to clear for action was given. The *Stromboli* got herself into position, and prepared to shell a little trench half-way up the cliff. The question was, What was the range?

"Try 2500 yards," the order was given. The shot sped on its way, but struck the precipice above the desired spot. The fact was, the Russians had all along been firing too short, in order to deceive the attacking force, as the Britishers now observed. The enemy opened fire in good earnest at last. "The shot flew over Captain Spratt's head, who was on the foretop, and plunged into the water two or three hundred yards beyond us." The *Stromboli* kept edging nearer, and sent another shot, at 2000 yards range; again it was a bit too high, and only caused the Russians to bob their heads. "The *Spitfire*, *Cracker*, and *Grinder* were now coming into action. The enemy's field-pieces took to shell, and studded the air above us with smoke-clouds; the angry hum of their splinters was heard on all sides. Whiz! right across our deck comes a shot, and plashes into the water over our counter. Our long gun at the bow sends a shot in reply, at 1700 yards, which goes into their battery this time. Whiz! whiz! two shots this time, one after the other, one dashing up the water close to her sides, the other cutting the jib foot-rope of the *Stromboli*."

As it was not intended to waste time and shot in clearing the numberless forts that lined the shore, each one of which would have been repaired and manned again the

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moment the British ships had departed, the Admiral prepared to leave the spot, gratifying Jack, however, by just one more and farewell shot. So the *Spitfire*, the *Cracker*, and the *Grinder* threw a shell each into the enemy's works, and then the fleet steamed away.

CHAPTER XXVI

AN ANTARCTIC CRUISE SEVENTY YEARS AGO

The United States Exploring Expedition of 1836—Captains Wilkes and Hudson—Vessels leave Sydney for Antarctic Ocean—The ice barrier reached—Coasting along it westward—"Ice ahead!"—A fright for Wilkes—Battle between a huge "killer" and a whale—The *Peacock*, Captain Hudson, battered by ice-floes—The ice-anchors at work—Rudder broken—An avalanche of ice and snow—A small boat between two closing icebergs—In a deep ice-bay—Out again—Vessel badly shattered—The *Vincennes* in a region of icebergs—Men unable to go on with their work—The danger from the grinding bergs—A perilous passage between two ice-islands—A terrible night—Land seen beyond the ice barrier.

IN the year 1836 the Government of the United States sent out an exploring expedition, under the command of Captain Wilkes of the U.S. Navy, an expedition that met with many adventures and did good work. There were six ships of various kinds in all, of which the chief were the *Vincennes*, commanded by the leader of the expedition himself, and the *Peacock*, under Captain Hudson. They were absent five years, or nearly so, during which time they visited many lands of the southern hemisphere. One part of the plan laid down for the expedition was the exploration of the Antarctic Ocean, more especially the continent, which even at that early period was believed to exist there, and which was just then attracting a good deal of attention. The names of

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various officers still survive in the Cape Hudson, Port Case, Port Emmons, Ringgold Knoll, and so forth of the Antarctic fringe of land.

The vessels left the harbour of Sydney, New South Wales, the day after Christmas Day, in the year 1839. Captain Wilkes had made many and great preparations for the comfort of his men. The ports were tightened to keep out the wet and cold as far as possible. Round all the hatchways rough casings of wood had been built, provided with weights and pulleys, so that the doors should not be left open through carelessness. Arrangements for heating the cabins up to 50° F., and no more, were made, the officers believing that that temperature was in every way better than a higher one in those intensely cold latitudes. Every morning and evening an inspection of the men's dress and boots was made, to ensure that none should go inadequately clad or shod.

The first iceberg was seen on January 10th. It was a mile in length, and towered out of the sea to a height of a hundred and eighty feet. The temperature of the water at once fell to 32°. After that icebergs in plenty were observed, and as the weather grew foggy, with occasional thick snowstorms, it was necessary to proceed with great caution. Presently the ice was seen to be stretching along, in one continuous line apparently, reaching beyond the limits of vision in either direction. The exploring party had come to the great ice barrier that lined the Antarctic coast. As they approached the barrier, however, they found it to be anything but a continuous line. Here a huge ice cape stood out; there a deep inlet ran in. An opening was perceived, and the ships stood into it, the captains hoping that it would lead to an open sea beyond. To their chagrin, they found themselves in an

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ice bay, and, the fog thickening, they had a hard task of it to get out again. Captain Wilkes now determined to coast along in a westerly direction till he met with the opening he wanted.

The crew of the *Vincennes* almost at once had a fright. It was most dangerous work, of course, to coast thus, in a thick mist, along an ice-bound coast with so many projecting capes threatening and so many deep indentations and passages. The vessel was tossing a good deal, when suddenly the water became as calm as a mill-pond, the wash and roar of the waves instantly hushed. It was a sign that the ship had run into some inlet or had passed within the icy barrier. Everybody rushed on deck in alarm, and all eyes were strained to make out through the fog the first glimpse of an ice reef. As Captain Wilkes says, "The feeling is awful and the uncertainty most trying, thus to enter within the icy barrier blindfolded as it were by an impenetrable fog, and the thought constantly recurring that both ship and crew are in imminent danger."

"Ice ahead!" came the cry. It was an alarming sound, but it proved that at any rate the fog was a little less dense. After a quarter of an hour, to the delight of the men, the mist cleared enough to show that the *Vincennes* was in the middle of a small landlocked bay, with insufficient sea room for the vessel. It took several hours before the ship could be got out of her awkward predicament. It was well the bay was so small; before long, another of the ships was to have experience of a much larger and more dangerous ice inlet.

The *Peacock*, which had become separated from her consorts, pursued her own way, and, a day or two later, her crew were provided with a curious and stirring spec-

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tacle. It was a battle between a whale and a huge ferocious fish, which the sailors called a "killer." This opponent had seized the whale by the lower jaw, much as a dog might seize a bull. With his mouthful of formidable teeth the "killer" was enabled to hang on in spite of all his victim's attempts to get away. "First, at a distance from the ship, the whale was seen floundering in a most extraordinary way, lashing the smooth sea into a perfect foam, and endeavouring apparently to extricate himself from some annoyance. As he approached the ship, the struggle continuing and becoming more violent, it was perceived that a fish, apparently about twenty feet long, held him by the jaw, his contortions, spouting, and throes all betokening the agony of the huge monster. The whale now threw himself at full length from the water with open mouth, his pursuer still hanging to the jaw, the blood issuing from the wound and dyeing the sea to a distance around; but all his flounderings were of no avail; his pertinacious enemy still retained his hold, and was evidently getting the advantage of him. Much alarm seemed to be felt by the many other whales around." The combatants passed the *Peacock* with such dashings and commotions that hardly anything could be seen of their shape or colour, and they had soon swum to too great a distance for the spectators to witness the end of the combat.

But more serious matters were soon to engage the attention of Captain Hudson and his men. While trying to "box off some ice under the bow, the ship made a stern-board, which brought the stern so forcibly in contact with a mass of ice, that it seemed from the shock as if it were entirely stove in." The rudder was so twisted that it made an angle with the keel, and was rendered useless.

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Various devices were tried to remedy this defect, but all proved useless. In this alarming state of affairs the ship again came in contact with the ice, and in no way could the captain get her clear of it. Bump after bump did the craft receive, scarce a minute passing without a shock from one quarter or another; and with every blow there was a risk that she might break to pieces. The position grew rapidly worse; floe ice began to surround the ship on all sides, and presently she was seen to be drifting helplessly on a prodigious iceberg.

It was thought best at once to get out the ice-anchors and attempt to fasten the *Peacock* to the berg. The anchors were accordingly got into position, and the hawser was just about to be made fast, when the vessel started astern so suddenly that the cable was dragged out of the men's hands before a single turn could be made with it. "The ship now drove stern foremost into the midst of the huge masses of ice, striking the rudder a second time. This blow gave it the finishing stroke, by nearly wringing off the head, breaking two of the pintles, and the upper and lower brace." Again attempts were made to plant the anchors, this time in one of the big ice floes. After many failures the men were successful, and they were just beginning to congratulate themselves, when suddenly the anchor slipped. The ship drove stern on in the direction of another berg with lofty perpendicular face as high as the masthead. Careering rapidly backwards in this fashion, the *Peacock* ran into a piece of loose ice that was floating between her and the iceberg. Would that floe stop her way and save her? For an instant the hope that it might filled the breasts of the sailors. It was a vain hope; for, "grinding along the ice,

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she went nearly stern foremost, and struck with her larboard quarter upon the ice-island with a tremendous crash."

The damage done by this shock was very great. The larboard stern-davit and the spanker-boom were carried bodily away; the starboard stern-davit and the spar-deck bulwarks, with which it was connected, were crushed or started; the rotten knee was broken off, and all the stanchions as far as the gangway. The rebound was correspondingly great, and, curiously, proved an advantage. It slewed her to starboard, and the sails catching a trifle of wind, the ship was driven away from the iceberg and through a narrow opening. A strange thing happened just before the vessel cleared the towering berg. An enormous mass of ice and snow had been hanging over the edge of the precipitous ice-cliff, and the *Peacock* had just passed this risky spot when down came the whole impending mass and dropped with an immense splash just astern of her. Had the fall occurred but a few seconds sooner, both ship and crew must have been overwhelmed and crushed to atoms.

The immediate danger from the iceberg had passed away, but the situation was still a terrible one for the sailors. Little more damage would be needed to send the vessel to the bottom, and the crew would then either have to go down with her, or take refuge on an ice-island, with a still more terrible, because more lingering and torturing, death before them. The ship was labouring heavily, with floating ice all round her agitated by the heaving of the waves. It was, in fact, "grinding and thumping against her on all sides; every moment something either fore or aft was carried away—chains, bolts, bobstays, bowsprit, shrouds; even the anchors were lifted,

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coming down with a surge that carried away the eye-bolts and lashings, and left them to hang by the stoppers. The cut-water also was injured, and every timber seemed to groan."

The boats that had been launched to plant the ice-anchors had a dreadful time of it. They were in charge of one of the midshipmen, Mr. Eld, and the business took two hours to accomplish, so difficult and full of danger was it. The swell caused the pieces of floating ice to grind together, and to dash into one another to such an extent that the boats were in peril of being swamped at any moment. And when the work was at last finished, it was found almost impossible to get back to the ship. The boat containing Mr. Midshipman Eld had presently one of the most curious experiences and one of the most extraordinary escapes that can be imagined. To come between the ship and the huge iceberg meant instant destruction for any craft, for the "ice and water were foaming like a cauldron." It was quite impossible to climb the steep and lofty side of the ice mass and approach the ship in that way. To have left the boat altogether, and attempt to get back to the ship by leaping from one piece of ice to another, would have been madness in such a disturbed sea. What actually happened cannot be given better than in Captain Wilkes's own words.

"At last a chance offered, though almost a hopeless one, by passing between two of these bergs, that appeared on the other side of a small clear space. The boat was upon a small piece of ice, from which, by great exertion, she was launched; a few pulls at the oars brought them to the passage; the bergs were closing fast, and agitated by the swell; no time, therefore, was to be lost; the

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danger was already great, and in a few seconds it would be impossible to pass. They entered; their oars caught, and they got but half-way through when the icebergs closed in upon them, and pressed the gunwales together, so as almost to crush the boat; the water entered her, and she was sinking; when the berg stopped, retreated, and by another hard shove they went through, and were soon alongside the ship."

Let us try for a moment to realise the position of Captain Hudson and his crew. Their vessel had in the fog found her way far into a huge ice-bay, the extent of which, as they afterwards ascertained, was quite thirty miles. This enormous inlet was full of floating ice, from the gigantic and precipitous bergs, the vast floes and sheets, down to the minor pieces. All these were tossing about in a troubled sea, subjecting the vessel to constant grindings and shocks of greater or less force. Soon this tumultuous concourse of ice-masses would be frozen into one unbroken ice-field, and connected with the continental ice that, year in year out, lined the shores of the southern land, a land itself little better than a still vaster ice-field. Once frozen in, the explorers would have no other fate before them than that of starving to death, even if they did not succumb to the terrible cold of the Antarctic winter. And should others of the exploring vessels come in search of them, what chance would there be of the *Peacock* being found in an ice-locked bay, and thirty miles from the open ocean! There was nothing for it but to endeavour at any cost to get out of the bay, even though it meant still more damage to, or the total destruction of the ship.

But the difficulties seemed to increase rather than diminish. A gale with heavy snowstorms came on. After

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a good many hours of it the wind died down to a gentle breeze, and the men were able to unship the rudder and set the carpenters to work on it. Then the weather cleared, and, to the joy of the unfortunate crew, the sea could be seen from the masthead. Captain Hudson resolved to crowd on all possible canvas and drive the vessel out to the open water, if by any means it could be done. The breeze freshened and a start was made. But the increased sea and the larger ice-blocks that were now encountered made it risky work. "Some of the shocks against the ship were so heavy as to excite fears that the bow would be driven in, and on one occasion three of the chronometers were thrown out of their beds of sawdust upon their sides." The quantity of ice around increased every minute, and, what was worse, the general collection of floes was drifting farther into the bay, carrying the ship with it, in spite of the fact that every stitch of sail was spread. The crew were in despair.

The coolness, perseverance, and presence of mind exhibited by the captain were in the highest degree admirable, and to these qualities there can be little doubt all owed their ultimate escape. As the breeze continued to gather strength, the vessel slowly made headway, till at last the men succeeded in passing the thick and solid ice, and shortly afterwards found themselves near the outlet, which was discovered to be only a quarter of a mile wide! How they had at first, even in the fog, managed to stumble out of the open ocean into this obscure trap was inexplicable. Just as they sailed out another snowstorm came on, but at last they reached clear water, "without a rudder, the gripe gone, and, as was afterwards found, the stem ground down to within an inch and a half of the wood-ends." There was but one thing to be done now, to

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abandon the further exploration of the ice-bound coast, and set a course northward again. The crew hoped, notwithstanding the various injuries the *Peacock* had sustained, to reach New Zealand.

Meanwhile the *Vincennes*, Captain Wilkes's own ship, was likewise going through a trying time. During the storms and fogs she contrived somehow to get into a region of icebergs, which studded the ocean thickly, and careered hither and thither, colliding with and grinding against each other in a most terrifying way. The cold became so severe that every bit of spray was instantly frozen into particles of ice. The ship was weighed down with the masses of ice and snow that thickly encrusted deck, masts, sails, cordage. It was almost impossible to work the ship at all; men sent aloft were nearly frozen to death, some of them being rescued from their dangerous positions only with the utmost difficulty. One of the gunners slipped on the icy deck and broke several ribs. And all the while it required the most constant vigilance to steer clear of the threatening bergs that bore down on the vessel. Many of the best men were down with cold, exhaustion, and illness. The commander became first anxious, then alarmed, and at last almost despairing.

About midnight Captain Wilkes, who, tired out, had gone to take a short rest, was hurriedly summoned on deck again. "The gale at this moment was awful. We found we were passing large masses of drift-ice, and ice-islands became more numerous. At a little after one o'clock it was terrific, and the sea was now so heavy that I was obliged to reduce sail still further." The topsails were clewed up and the mainsails furled with enormous trouble, as may be imagined from the condition in which they were. By the time the work was finished, several

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other men had to be sent below to the doctor. The *Vincennes*, notwithstanding this lessening of sail, was still dashing on at a great rate. Suddenly there came a roar of voices.

"Ice ahead! On the weather bow! On the lee bow and abeam!" The ice was, in fact, on all sides; the vessel was entirely beset with it.

"All hope of escape seemed in a moment to vanish; return we could not, as large ice-islands had just been passed to leeward; so we dashed on, expecting every moment the crash. The ship, in an instant, from having her lee guns under water, rose upright; and so close were we passing to leeward of one of these huge islands, that our trysails were almost thrown aback by the eddy wind. The helm was put up to pay the ship off, but the proximity of those under our lee bade me keep my course. All was now still except the distant roar of the wild storm that was raging behind, before, and above us; the sea was in great agitation, and both officers and men were in the highest degree excited. The ship continued her way, and as we proceeded a glimmering of hope arose, for we accidentally had hit upon a clear passage between two large ice-islands, which in fine weather we should not dare to have ventured through. The suspense endured while making our way between them was intense, but of short duration; and my spirits rose as I heard the whistling of the gale grow louder and louder before us, as we emerged from the passage. We had escaped an awful death, and were again tempest-tossed."

A fearful night was passed, but in the morning the storm blew itself out, and the sea subsided, till by noon it was as still as a pond. The atmosphere, too, became so clear that from the masthead a most extensive view

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could be obtained in every direction. And what a sight it was, looking back towards the region of icebergs just left! The sea was seen to be so full of them that "no straight line could have been drawn from the ship in any direction that would not have cut a dozen icebergs in as many miles." The crew were amazed at the sight, and exclamations of astonishment flew from mouth to mouth. The men could hardly believe that the vessel had passed through such an ice-encumbered sea, and that too in a furious storm, and yet have emerged in safety. Another sight that gladdened the eyes of commander and men was that of land, which was plainly perceived beyond the icy barrier that lined its shores and made approach to it so difficult and so perilous. The spirits of all rose high, and they looked forward with renewed confidence to discoveries worthy of the expedition and of the great nation that had sent it forth.

CHAPTER XXVII

AN ENGLISH LADY'S VOYAGE TO THE EAST

Lady Hester Stanhope—Embarks in the *Jason* frigate for the East—Almost wrecked off Trafalgar—Passage in the *Cerberus* from Gibraltar to Malta—On a Greek ship in the Sea of Marmora—A model crew!—The Turk and his gun—A violent hurricane between Rhodes and Alexandria—Aristocrats at the buckets—Lady Hester's pluck—Vessel heels gunwale down—Long-boat launched—All land on a tiny rock—Skipper and men go off to Rhodes in the boat—Rescued from the rock—Swamped—A wretched shelter—To Alexandria in the *Salsette*—Tempest-driven again—Shot at by Turkish soldiers—Prisoners in a block-house—Profuse apologies.

MOST people have read of the eccentric Lady Hester Stanhope, who, a century ago, lived so much in the East, especially among the mountains of Lebanon, where she assumed Eastern costume and lived in Oriental style. Her voyage out affords some curious incidents, and, besides, illustrates in excellent fashion the conditions under which travellers in those days pursued their journeys about that part of the world.

It was on the 10th of February, 1810, when Lady Hester took her passage in the *Jason* frigate, commanded by Captain the Honourable James King. It may easily be imagined that so great a lady would have a numerous retinue, and so it was. Besides personal friends, titled or untitled, she took a physician, and a large following of servants. The *Jason* was bound for Gibraltar, with a

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number of merchant vessels under convoy. The weather proved to be bad from the very first, and it took the fleet a whole week to reach Land's End, from Portsmouth, whence they had set out. Then off the coast of Spain a violent tempest scattered the convoy, and drove the frigate upon the shoals of Trafalgar. "It was for some hours uncertain," writes her ladyship's physician, "whether we should not have to encounter the horrors of shipwreck, on the very shore where so many brave sailors perished after the battle which derives its name from these shoals; but, on the following morning, by dint of beating to windward, under pressure of sail, in a most tremendous sea, we weathered the land," and reached Gibraltar.

After a stay on the "Rock," Lady Stanhope took passage in another frigate, the *Cerberus*. Her troubles began again even before she got on board, for the boat which was taking her out to the ship was all but swamped, and the passengers had a narrow escape. Then the frigate managed to run on a rock before she got fairly under way, but luckily did not receive such damage as to prevent her from sailing. Things went fairly well till the Sea of Marmora was reached, when a tremendous storm bore down on the Greek vessel to which they had been transferred at Malta. The hammocks swung to such a degree that the occupants were glad to spring out and dress. When the passengers reached the deck, they found the crew—doing what? Not their duty, but going about the ship collecting money. "The sum they received they tied in a handkerchief and fastened to the tiller, with a vow to St. George that they would dedicate the money to his shrine, if we reached some port in safety!" As for the hubbub among these model sailors,

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it was terrific. The skipper prudently steered for the nearest place where a landing might be effected, and the lady and her attendants were put ashore, much to their relief.

After a long stay in Constantinople, Lady Hester again shipped in a Greek barque, with a Greek crew, for Alexandria. Her usual luck at sea still pursued her, and the vessel had only just cleared the Bosphorus when another storm came on, and the captain ran for the Prince's Islands, where they had to spend the greater part of a week, weather-bound. A more or less troubled passage to the island of Scio in the Archipelago ended in yet another delay, this time for ten days, strong gales prevailing all the time.

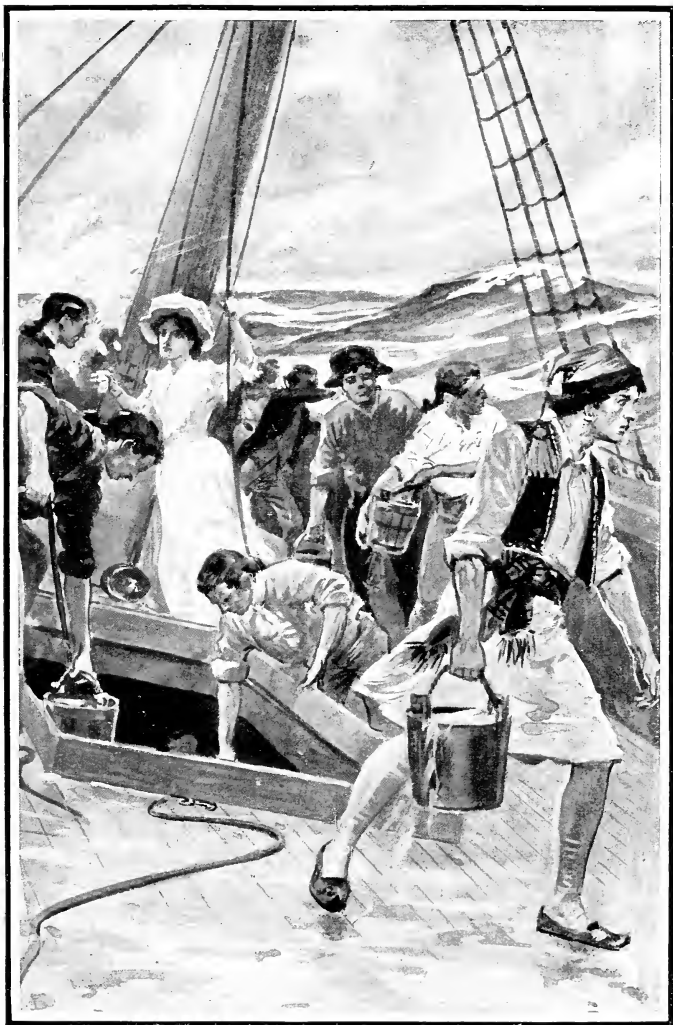
An incident of the sort common enough at that time and place must be recorded. Near Lady Stanhope's vessel lay a Turkish schooner. The rival crews indulged in many an uncomplimentary remark to each other across the short space that separated them, and before long matters grew more serious. An intoxicated Turk worked himself into a wild rage with one of the Greek crew, and drew his pistol, taking instant aim at his enemy, as he conceived the man to be. The bullet missed the Greek, but passed through the mosquito-net of Lady Stanhope's bed, to the no little alarm of the onlookers. Most fortunately the lady was not at that moment occupying the couch, or her journey would almost certainly have come to a sudden end. She complained to the Governor of the island, when the offending Turk was seized, and the Englishwoman informed that she had only to name the punishment she wished the man to receive, whatever it might be! Needless to say, the lady did not desire the death of the drunken fellow.

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After a few hours' stay at Rhodes the vessel set sail for Alexandria. For a couple of days the sea was smooth, and half the distance had been made, when there came a change. The sky was overcast, and a strong southerly wind began to blow, so that they were obliged to beat to windward. For a whole day this slow progress went on, till at last the gale had increased to a hurricane, and the captain was compelled to wear the ship. Before long there was a loud outcry that she had sprung a leak. All hands were immediately ordered to the pumps; but, as usual with the easy-going Levantines, the pumps were out of order and almost useless. Meanwhile the water in the hold was rapidly increasing, and the buckets were called into requisition. Every man on board, passenger as well as sailor, was pressed into service; and Lady Hester's aristocratic friends, her physician, and all her male servants, worked like navvies, while the ship's course was set for Rhodes again.

Lady Hester showed unbounded pluck at this trying juncture. She quietly dressed herself, and put a few of the most necessary things into a small bag, prepared for whatever might come. Further, to encourage and strengthen the men in their heavy labours with the buckets, she broached a cask of wine she had with her, and with her own hands distributed the contents among them, bidding them be of good courage. The conduct of this nobly born and delicately nurtured lady formed a great contrast to the behaviour of some of the Greek sailors, as will presently be seen.

The vessel was becoming every minute more waterlogged, notwithstanding all exertions. Presently she heeled gunwale down. To the alarm of all, she did not right herself, and, in fact, she never afterwards assumed



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The pumps would not work, so every person on board was pressed into service to bail out the water with buckets.



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an even keel. In this distressing situation certain of the crew collapsed, ceasing their efforts, and flinging themselves down on the deck, beside themselves with fright, weeping like women, to the great contempt of the lady and her company. Some of the fellows shook as if they had a bad ague fit, crying the while in the most lamentable tones, "All the saints protect us!" Truly an unpromising state of things for the passengers!

But now the island of Rhodes was seen in the offing, and, notwithstanding the terrible list and the waterlogged state of the barque, she was brought to within about a couple of miles of the shore. Then all at once the vessel refused to obey her helm, and no longer made any way. That she was sinking fast was plainly seen; indeed, it was only a question of minutes. The long-boat was hoisted out and with some difficulty launched. She was a very small craft for the twenty-five human beings crowded into her, and orders were passed round that no one was to carry baggage of any sort. The rope was let go, and the boat, sunk to the water's level, slowly made her way across the tossing sea.

It was clearly impossible to traverse the two miles to the island, and the pilot steered for a piece of bare rock that showed above the waves not far away. It was now doubtful if even that spot could be reached, for the boat, every moment washed and filled by the heavy seas, was in imminent danger of foundering. Luckily the rock was reached in safety, and the boat was pushed round to the leeward of it, and drawn up in a tiny creek just big enough to hold her. For the moment the relief amongst the miserable beings was great. But when they came to reflect more calmly on their position, it was the reverse of assuring. Here were they all crowded on a bare rock

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exposed to the fury of the winds and the dashing of the spray; without food or water; and with the prospect before them of remaining there for some time. There was but one little spot, a sort of cave, where a shelter from the blinding spray could be obtained, and that was assigned to Lady Stanhope and her maid. Neither food nor water was for the present so much needed as rest, for every soul was half dead with fatigue. With one accord, therefore, they threw themselves upon the bare rock and instantly dropped off to sleep, all, except the two women, swept by the cold salt spray.

About midnight, after a few hours of heavy sleep, the captain rose, and, finding that the wind had abated somewhat, proposed that he and his crew should take the boat and endeavour to reach Rhodes, whence they would be able to bring help to the others. Some of the passengers were not much disposed to put faith in the sailors, well knowing the Greek character; but there was no help for it, and the skipper went off with his men. He had promised to make a fire on the shore, as soon as the boat had landed in safety. Anxiously those left behind awaited the signal, and after about two hours, the blaze was perceived on the beach of Rhodes.

A most trying day was passed on the rock. Hungry, thirsty, wet, cold, and miserable, the poor wretches strained their eyes in the constant search for some craft coming to their help. The day wore on and evening drew nigh. The sun was setting in the western waves, and the party had given up all hope of relief that day. Then a speck was seen, and soon the boat returned, manned by a few of the sailors, the skipper having taken care not to expose himself again to any risk. The men brought some bread and cheese, with water and arrack. For

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thirty hours the famished wights on the rock had tasted nothing.

“But another danger now stared us in the face. The sailors had found liquor on shore, and had made themselves drunk. They grew riotous and insolent, and, in the course of the night, declared their resolution of rowing back again. In vain we requested that they would wait till daylight, till the wind abated. They were determined; and, as those who remained behind could have no chance but to perish, we were compelled to go with them. The sea was high; and, as they were pulling almost in the face of it, the labour of the sailors was very severe. But, for the same reason, the nearer we approached the shore the smoother the water became. At last the stern touched, and a wave, that filled her from head to stern, at once overwhelmed her. Lady Hester was hoisted out, and each made his way to the shore as he could. The boat, soon after, was swamped and staved.”

It was a wretched spot on which the shipwrecked group had landed, and there was no shelter from the pitiless rain except an old windmill by the shore. The men made a fire outside this, as best they could, and Lady Hester and her party took up their quarters in it. It was a wretched place, filthy in the extreme, as were all the habitations of the village they visited next morning. Rats swarmed, and ran incessantly, even up and down the ropes. The maid was so horrified that she rushed outside and spent the rest of the night in the pouring rain. After a miserable time the shipwrecked English folk were carried to the town, where the British consul played the part of the Good Samaritan, providing them with food and shelter, and such clothing as he could command.

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Their difficulties in the way of getting a passage to Alexandria were extraordinary, and the account of them is amusing reading in these days of splendid and punctual mail-steamers and magnificent P. and O. liners. It was impossible to find any craft at Rhodes to take the lady and her suite across, and at length she dispatched her physician to Smyrna, on the chance of his there meeting with what she wanted. He accordingly crossed in a small coasting vessel to the port of Smyrna, where, after much bargaining, he managed to hire another Greek barque, a wretched affair, but the best that could be had. The vessel started for Rhodes to fetch the rest of the party. But it was not to be; off the island of Scio a gale came on, and it was at once plain that the Greek could not stand against anything of that kind. The physician had to go back to Rhodes in despair. But unexpected help arrived most opportunely. A British frigate, the *Salsette*, Captain Hope, came over from Smyrna harbour to Rhodes, the commander having heard of Lady Stanhope's shipwreck and forlorn predicament. His offer was gratefully accepted, and a hasty embarkation was made, as the stormy season was at hand, and Captain Hope was uneasy. Hardly had the frigate started when a violent tempest drove her back to the little Rhodian harbour of Marmora for shelter. At length, all dangers past, the English party made Pompey's Pillar, and reached Alexandria on the 14th of January. They had left Constantinople on the 23rd of the previous October!

After a stay there Lady Hester desired to go on to Rosetta, and an awkward and adventurous voyage it proved. First, the luggage was carried by porters down to the shore of Lake Madieh, really an arm of the sea, though connected with the open water by only a very

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narrow opening. Here the party bargained with an old janissary and his boy for a passage in his boat to the Bay of Aboukir. They had got only a couple of miles on their way, when a number of men were observed running along the shore, hallooing with all their might and gesticulating violently. No attention was paid to them for some time, but at last the old helmsman declared that there was something wrong, and that a return must be made. Then came an amusing scene. The old fellow turned the rudder for this purpose, and the gentlemen immediately seized the tiller and turned it back again. For a time this sort of thing went on, till at last the passengers grew tired of the struggle and gave way.

When they had got to within half a mile of the shore, they perceived another boat coming out to meet them. Directly afterwards there was a flash, and a bullet whistled over their heads. It was now seen that the other boat was full of armed soldiers. Matters were assuming an awkward aspect, and the passengers awaited developments with no little anxiety. The physician cried out in Turkish, "What do you want?" Thereupon an Albanian, who seemed to be in command of the military party, knelt down and took deliberate aim.

"Our old janissary no sooner beheld the muzzle of the gun than he dropped down in the boat; he expected the Albanian officer (for such he proved to be) would have fired; but the people with him were evidently urging him not to do so. We reached the shore, and were immediately seized, disarmed, and a volley of oaths and imprecations was vented upon us. In vain our trembling janissary said that we were Englishmen, belonging to a great English person, and that those who did us harm would rue it: he was not heeded."

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The prisoners were marched along the dam that separated the so-called lakes, Madieh and Moeris, and were confined in a block-house on the shore. It was some time before the prisoners could learn the nature of their offence, but at last it turned out that they had embarked without submitting their passports to the authorities. However, the soldiers were at length persuaded to allow the physician to go to Alexandria to put the case before the high officials there. Another of the Englishmen was kept as a hostage, but was permitted to sleep in the boat. In due time the doctor returned, to find his friend still in the boat, famished, and wet through with the heavy dews of that country. The Albanian officer was now called to account by the person of rank who had come back with the physician, and it was laughable to see the marvellous change in the man's demeanour. He became very humble, and offered all manner of services to the Englishmen. But the indignant travellers would have neither his apologies nor his attentions, and declared that they wanted to be gone as soon as possible. So, at daybreak, all left the block-house and re-embarked, this time to reach Aboukir Bay without further adventure.

CHAPTER XXVIII

LORD EXMOUTH'S ESCAPES

Viscount Exmouth—The *Indefatigable* aground—Ready decision—How to deal with skulkers—An extraordinary examination of the ship—A wrecked cutter—A leap to the rescue—Wounded and in a critical position—Saving the men of the *Dutton*—A truly modest report—A mutiny on board the *Indefatigable*—Nerve and decision—Mutiny on the *Impétueux*—An execution—Battle with the *Droits de l'homme*—Splendid seamanship—A fearful story—Bombardment of Algiers—Marvellous daring.

THE life-story of almost any one of the long and glorious line of great British sea-captains yields a whole series of gallant actions, hairbreadth escapes, and stirring scenes generally. It matters little where we choose. A dip into the biography of one of the most distinguished of them, Edward Pellew, afterwards the famous Viscount Exmouth, will serve well to illustrate this. So full of adventures of the most striking kind, indeed, was Lord Exmouth's career, that one is almost bewildered by the number and brilliancy of his exploits. It is only the merest gleanings that can be given in the present chapter.

In the summer of 1795 the *Indefatigable*, then commanded by Captain Sir Edward Pellew, was sent, with the *Concorde*, to chase a suspicious-looking vessel off Cape Finisterre. The water was as smooth as glass, as with all sail set the frigates flew after the enemy. Captain Pellew was looking at the land, about noon, when he perceived

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his acting master, Mr. Bell, coming towards him. Mr. Bell had heard a noise as of something breaking aloft. He could see nothing there, but further investigation proved that the vessel was aground. He at once had the hand-lead flung over the side, to find but eighteen feet of water, whereas the *Indefatigable* drew nineteen feet six inches abaft. It was evident that the ship was suspended by her centre on a bit of sunken rock. Not for an instant did Pellew hesitate in so alarming and dangerous a situation. He immediately gave orders to move some of the main-deck guns, when, happily, the ship rolled or slid off the rock into deep water. She was thus far safe; but she had already five feet of water in her hold, and more was pouring in with alarming rapidity. The pumps were at once manned, and for three days the gallant sailors worked incessantly, toiling as only first-rate men will do in such cases. All the while, the captain was slowly steering for Lisbon. His ready decision had saved the lives, doubtless, of every man on board.

At Lisbon the British consul sent on board the *Indefatigable* a number of Portuguese sailors to relieve the worn-out crew. Early next morning these fellows left the pumps, saying that it was a saint's day and they would not work. Mr. Bell ran into the captain's cabin to inform him of this. In a moment Pellew had seized his sword, and rushed out just as he was, in his dressing-gown. Without the least hesitation he bore down on the whole gang of the Portuguese, and a ludicrous chase began. The skulkers fled like sheep before him, tearing round and round the ship. First one and then another hurriedly rushed back to his work, till at last every man was pumping for his life again, Sir Edward standing by to see they kept at it.

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It now became necessary to make an examination of the bottom of the vessel, in order to see what and where the damage was. This kind of examination generally means trouble and delay, both of which Pellew meant to avoid, if possible. To the astonishment and alarm of everybody, the captain, declaring he would make the examination forthwith, sprang overboard. He swam first along one side, then along the other, and after that dived under her, not leaving the water till he had gained a full and clear knowledge of what he wanted to know. When the *Indefatigable* came to be docked for the repairs, it was found that his description of her injuries was accurate in every respect. And bad enough the damage was: "twenty-seven of her floors and first futtocks" were found to be broken.

Repairs finished, the ship put to sea again, but almost at once encountered heavy gales. Sir Edward, at his dinner below, heard a tremendous bustle above, and, in his usual way, dashed at full speed upon deck. He found a cutter wrecked in the surging waters, and two men endeavouring with great difficulty to keep themselves afloat. It appeared that owing to the heaving of the sea the tackle had become unhooked in the launching of the cutter, and that the next wave had dashed the craft to pieces. The captain jumped into the gig and ordered his men to lower it just above the cutter. Men and officers were alarmed, and endeavoured to dissuade their superior from so dangerous an attempt. Pellew would not listen, and down the gig went. The next instant came a thundering wave, breaking the boat as if it were a shell, and flinging the occupant into the water.

Sir Edward was seen to be bleeding badly about the face and head, and it was evident he had been seriously

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hurt. The utmost consternation prevailed on board the vessel, for it was feared he would swoon off and drop to the bottom like a stone. But the swimmer kept his head in a marvellous manner, and shouted for a rope. In a trice a dozen were thrown to him, and, catching one, he was hauled up. It was found that his nostril had been torn up by a hook, and that he had been badly bruised besides. But by this time the jolly-boat had been hoisted out from the booms, and the men of the cutter's crew picked up. This was the third time that year that Sir Edward Pellew had risked his life to save that of others. A still finer, and indeed a magnificent, act of bravery was soon to follow.

It was in the January of the following year. Captain Pellew and his wife were at Plymouth. On their way to dine with a friend one day, they noticed a great crowd running to the shore. Leaving Lady Pellew, Sir Edward sprang out of his carriage and ran after the multitudes. He saw an appalling sight. A great transport ship, the *Dutton*, with hundreds of soldiers on board, had got on the shoal, her rudder gone, her masts all broken and hanging overboard. That every soul on board would perish seemed certain, and the vast crowd on shore could do nothing. The unfortunate ship was rolling frightfully, and each roll might be her last. Her captain was on shore indisposed, and the confusion on board was therefore likely to be very great; besides, night was coming on fast, and soon it would be too late to do anything.

But there was one spectator who did not despair, and who had no thought of standing idle. Pellew called for a boat to take him to the doomed ship, but not a waterman would risk his life or his boat. In vain Sir Edward pleaded; none stirred to do his bidding.

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"Then I'll go myself!" he shouted, and he flew to the hawser which the officers of the *Dutton* had somehow managed to get to the shore. Two or three men had already saved themselves by this cable, but the risk was too great for many to attempt it, for the rolling of the ship swayed the hawser to such an extent that a man hanging to it would first be thrown high up into the air, and then dropped with a dash into the boiling sea. By the help of this, nevertheless, Captain Pellew made his way to the stranded vessel. At the last moment, just before he reached her side, he was dragged under one of the masts, and his back received severe injury. Taking no notice of this, however, he extricated himself, and climbed on deck, to the ringing cheers of the crowd on the ship and the still greater crowd watching breathlessly from the shore.

In a moment he drew his sword, and, declaring his name and rank, announced that he took over the command of the ship. He assured the frightened people that if they would only keep a good heart and follow his instructions implicitly and readily, not one of them would be lost, and that he himself would be the last to quit the ship. His words did wonders in the way of tranquillising the folk; they knew that if any mortal man could devise a means of saving them, Sir Edward Pellew was that man. His task was rendered none the easier, be it said, by the fact that many of the soldiers were drunk, having got at the spirits before he had come aboard.

Pellew's own ship, the *Indefatigable*, was lying at Plymouth, and her officers, all ignorant that their own commander had gone on board the *Dutton*, were now making the most strenuous efforts to render help. They had rushed to the spot with boats, but were quite unable

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to reach the sinking vessel. They were, in truth, within an ace of losing some of their own boats and men in the attempts they were making. But other boats came to the rescue, and some of these were more fortunate. Two, under the direction of Mr. Hemmings, the master-attendant at Plymouth, succeeded in reaching the *Dutton*. By this means two more hawsers were fixed between shore and ship, and to these Captain Pellew fitted travelling cradles. All was now ready; the children were sent first, those on shore regulating the lengths of the cables to suit the rollings of the vessel. Amidst a scene of the wildest excitement the little ones were conveyed to land. Then followed the women and the ailing; after that came the turn of the soldiers, and they were followed by the sailors. There remained but two or three officers and Sir Edward himself, and these were the last to leave the ship. Every man, woman, and child was saved, and Plymouth rang with the applause of the admiring crowds. The *Dutton* went to pieces almost directly afterwards. Will it be believed that after an action so heroic and so beneficent, the gallant captain gave the chief praise to Mr. Hemmings, and that in the journal of the *Indefatigable* the only entry concerning this splendid piece of work runs thus: "Sent two boats to the assistance of a ship ashore in the Sound." Greater modesty than this it would surely be hard to find.

It was a time when mutinies were, unhappily, rife in the navy, and some of them tried the mettle and tact of the authorities to the uttermost, and, in more cases than one, beyond that point. Sir Edward Pellew, popular though he was in his profession and amongst sailors generally, did not escape troubles of this kind. In 1799 a plot was hatched on board his own *Indefatigable*. One of the

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sailors stole secretly by night to the captain to tell him of it, but Sir Edward professed to pooh-pooh the notion. However, next day a lieutenant sent him word that the men refused to work at the capstan. At once the commander drew his sword, telling his officers to do likewise. Said he, "You can never die so well as on your own deck quelling a mutiny; and now, if a man hesitate to obey you, cut him down without a word." It was enough; the sailors knew the man with whom they had to deal, and in a moment the mutiny was at an end.

A far more serious case occurred on the *Impétueux*, to the command of which Pellew was afterwards appointed. He was one day dressing in his cabin, when he was hurriedly summoned on deck by a subordinate officer. The captain found everything in the greatest confusion. It appeared that the sailors had in a body refused to obey orders, though the marines had remained loyal. "No! No! No!" the crew had cried to all the commands given by the officers, and when a lieutenant had run to fetch the captain the men had shouted, "One and all! One and all!"

When Sir Edward reached the deck—in his dressing-gown, as on a former occasion—he found the whole body of sailors pressing forward and shouting in the most excited and defiant manner. He was received with hootings, and amidst the din cries of "A boat! A boat!" were heard. Without a trace of fear the commander confronted the hundreds of insubordinate sailors, calmly inquiring what they wanted. Somebody replied that they had a letter of complaint to take to the Admiral, and demanded a boat.

"Give the letter to me," quietly responded the captain, "and I will take it myself to the Admiral, or send an

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officer with it." A great hubbub ensued, and in vain Sir Edward endeavoured to pacify the men. At last the ringleader replied with an imprecation that they meant to have a boat.

"You will, will you?" was all Sir Edward said, and he rushed to the cabin for his sword.

Darting back to the deck, he called on the marines to support him, and every man of them obeyed. This loyalty, together with his own resolute bearing, instantly won the day for the captain. He ordered the quarter-deck to be cleared, and there was at once a wild stampede, the mutineers running down the hatchways with cries to put out the lights and take away the ladders. Nothing daunted, Pellew darted in amongst them, and with his own hands seized one of the most notorious of the ringleaders, threatening to cut the fellow down if he made the least resistance. The mutiny was quelled, a most fortunate thing; for there were a number of other warships whose crews were prepared to follow the example of the *Impétueux* men.

There was a strange scene at the execution of the three chief mutineers, who had been sentenced to death by the court-martial the Admiral had held. The men of the *Impétueux* put on an air of bravado, evidently intending to make the occasion a sort of triumph for the martyrs, as they styled the condemned. Sir Edward dispelled the feeling at once by his action. There were amongst the sailors assembled to see the execution a score or so of men who had followed Sir Edward from the *Indefatigable*.

"Indefatigables," the commander cried, "stand aside! Not one of you shall touch the rope. But you," he continued, addressing the men of the *Impétueux* herself,

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“you, who have encouraged your shipmates to the crime by which they have forfeited their lives, it shall be your punishment to hang them !” The crew fell back beneath his stern gaze, and so overcome were many of them, and so thoroughly ashamed of their conduct, that they burst into tears. There was no better-behaved or more loyal crew in the British Navy than that of the *Impétueux* after that.

The story of the wonderful fight between the two British frigates *Indefatigable* and *Amazon*, and the huge French line-of-battle ship *Droits de l'homme*, is too long to be told in full in this place. In its sequel, especially, it was one of the most remarkable things in all naval history. As the French Commodore afterwards wrote, “The ships fought like three dogs till they all fell over the cliff together.” This sums up the result in a sentence. All day long the vessels had engaged in the hottest of fights, giving little heed to their position, and it was not till all three had been badly battered, and for the most part disabled, that the respective crews noticed clearly the dangerous situation into which they had all got. The French coast was close at hand, and it seemed impossible to save any of the ships. The *Indefatigable* ran to the south, the *Amazon* northwards, while the French ship, under stress of the furious gale that was blowing full inshore, and in her unmanageable condition, was carried helplessly among the raging breakers.

The *Indefatigable* stood away till a cry of “Breakers ahead !” was raised, and then she wore, and stood northwards once more. While on this tack she passed close to the stranded *Droits de l'homme*, on whose deck were seen hundreds of poor fellows doomed to destruction. Pellew's heart went out to these most unfortunate beings, till

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lately his enemies, but now fellow-mortals in direst extremity, whom he was utterly powerless to aid. It is characteristic of this brave man that he wept at the appalling spectacle. But his own ship was herself in a most precarious position, her safety dependent on the holding together of damaged mast and rigging. The next hour or two showed some of the finest seamanship ever seen. Sir Edward Pellew watched every point with the most consummate skill, gaining a trifle on each tack, till at length he brought his ship triumphantly out of danger, though badly injured and helpless, and with six feet of water in her hold.

The *Amazon* had been lost sight of all this time, and Pellew knew nothing of her. As a matter of fact, she had struck almost as soon as she had ceased firing, and within a few minutes of the striking of the *Droits de l'homme*. Thanks, however, to the admirable discipline on board, every soul got safely to land on rafts they made; all, except half a dozen men who stole the cutter and made off with her. This craft was almost immediately swamped, and all in her were lost.

We may now turn for a moment to the *Droits de l'homme*, lying on her broadside in the surf. Her story is almost the exact opposite of that of the *Amazon*. On the French ship the confusion was terrible, in marked contrast with the coolness and admirable discipline seen on board the other. Her masts had gone by the board; numbers of the men had been swept off the deck with the very first waves after she had struck; the air rang with the cries of the soldiers and sailors on board. There had been at first no fewer than sixteen hundred souls on the *Droits de l'homme*, and these, crowded together in despair, vainly shouted to the multitudes watching them from the

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shore, that shore which seemed so near, but which so few of them were ever to tread again. Yet the Frenchmen on board had acted with noble humanity and thoughtfulness. There were about fifty English prisoners on the *Droits de l'homme*, and the instant she struck, these poor fellows were called up from the hold to take the same chance, small indeed though that might be, with their captors. "Poor English," the Frenchmen cried, "come up quickly; we are all lost!" We may give a few words showing the fearful state of things on the Frenchman three or four days after the disaster.

"Already nine hundred had perished, when the fourth night came with renewed terrors. Weak, distracted, and wanting everything, we envied the fate of those whose lifeless corpses no longer needed sustenance. The sense of hunger was already lost, but a parching thirst consumed our vitals. Recourse was had to wine and salt water, which only increased the want. . . . Almost at the last gasp every one was dying with misery: the ship, which was now one-third shattered away from the stern, scarcely afforded a grasp to hold by to the exhausted and helpless survivors. The fourth day brought with it a more serene sky, and the sea seemed to subside; but to behold, from fore and aft, the dying in all directions, was a sight too shocking for the feeling mind to endure." The story is too sad to continue, but next day about four hundred were taken off in rafts and boats by helpers from other vessels. Only a hundred and fifty of these reached the shore, the rest being swamped and perishing in the tumultuous sea. There were still nearly four hundred left on board whom it was impossible to rescue that night. Next morning half of these were found dead in the ship. Needless to say, the gallant Pellew, with his

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own terribly damaged vessel, could render no assistance to his most unfortunate enemy.

We may take just one more peep at Lord Exmouth, as we must by this time call him, when he was bombarding Algiers. This battle has been described as forming a class by itself among naval victories. It is well known that the attack was made to put down the disgraceful slave trade, which had been so extensively and so brutally carried on under the ægis of the Dey of Algiers, and that the victory achieved its object in the most thorough and brilliant manner. Scarcely ever before had a fleet attacked such formidable batteries as those of Algiers, and what makes the victory still more remarkable, is the fact that the fleet under Lord Exmouth was exceedingly small for the purpose. The leader had deliberately refused to employ a larger armament, owing to the impossibility of placing advantageously before the town any great number of vessels. It is worth noting that Lord Nelson himself, when consulted, years before, as to the number of ships he thought would be required to destroy the batteries of Algiers, had named a number five times that of Exmouth's actual fleet.

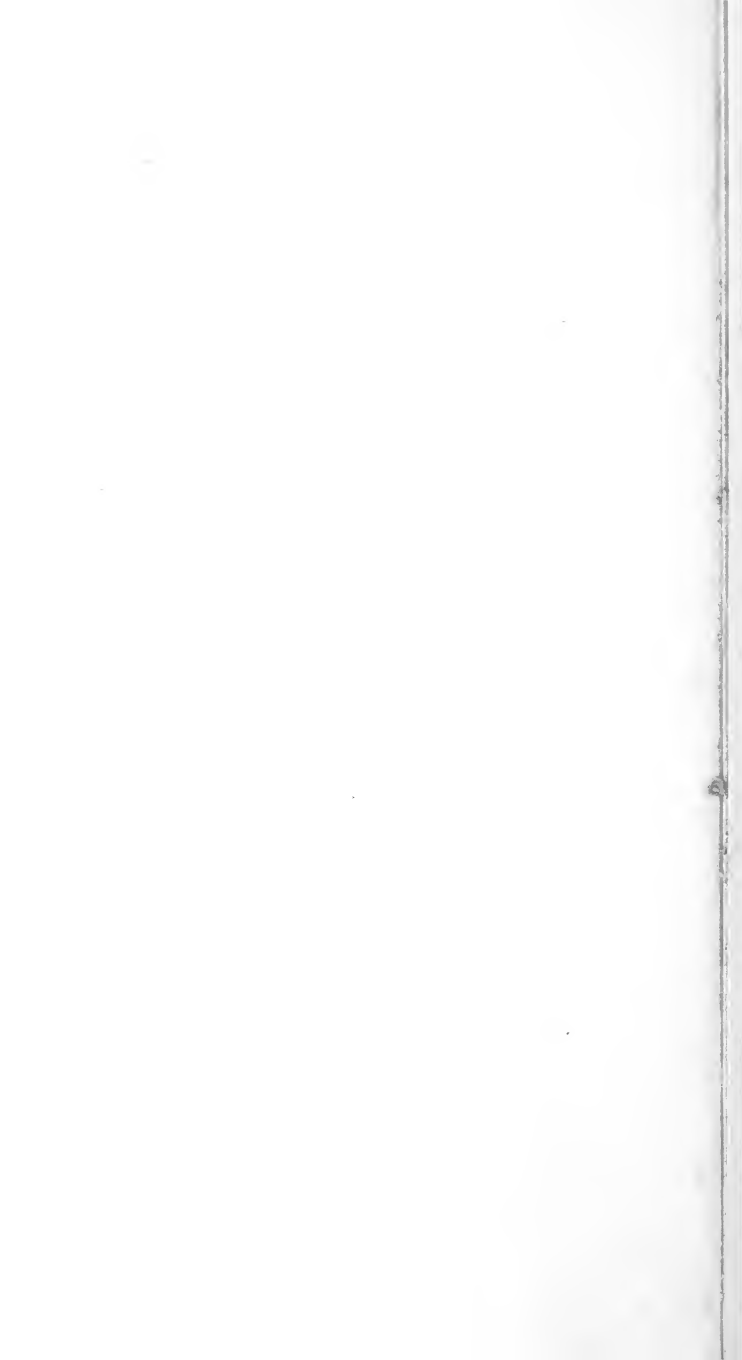
As soon as the *Queen Charlotte*, Lord Exmouth's flagship, had been placed in position, the sailors gave three rousing British cheers. Hardly had the last of them died away when there came a shot from one of the forts, striking the *Superb*. Another, and then another came hurtling along. But the commander-in-chief was ready. "Stand by!" he gave the order, when the enemy's first gun boomed forth. "Fire!" he cried, as the second shot came, while the third shot from the Algerine forts was lost in the roar from the *Queen Charlotte's* own thundering broadside.

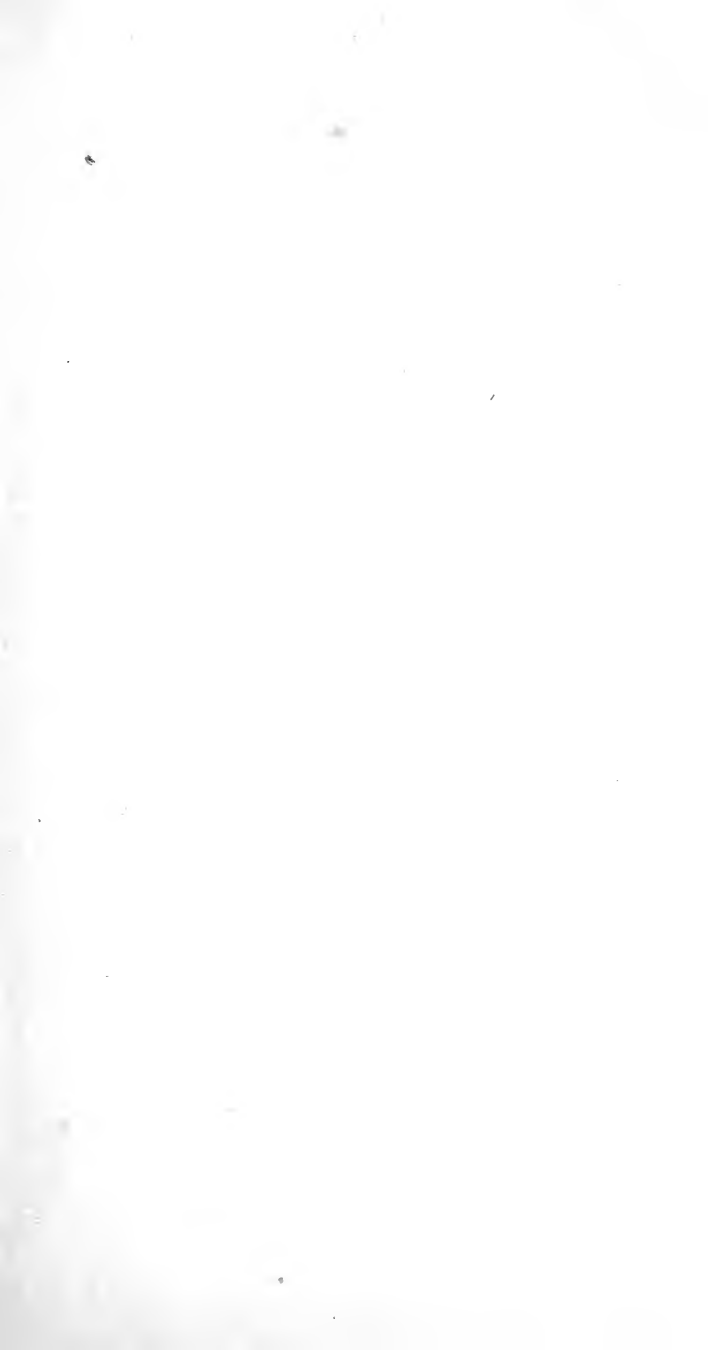
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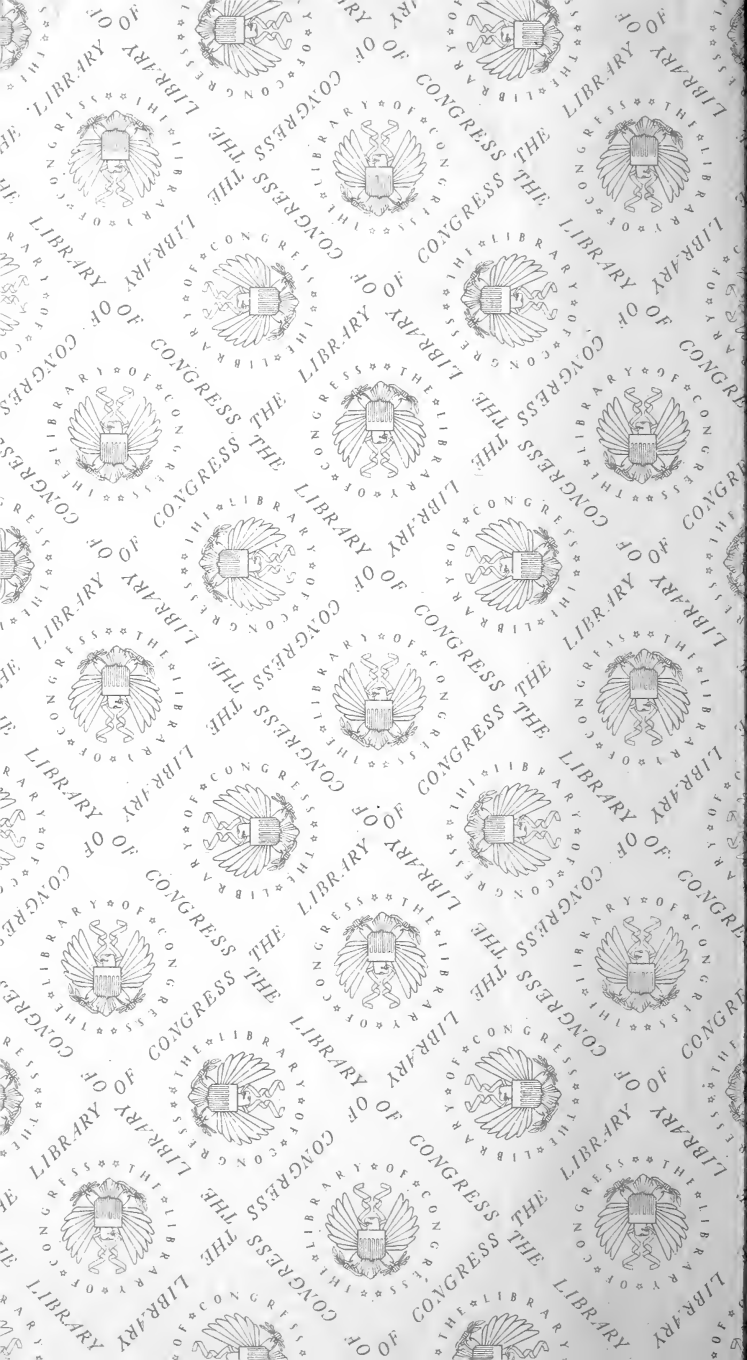
“In a few minutes, indeed before the battle had become general, the *Queen Charlotte* had ruined the fortifications of the Mole-head. Her shot struck with the most fatal accuracy, crumbling the tower of the lighthouse to ruins, and bringing down gun after gun from the batteries. The last of these guns was dismounted just as the artillerymen were in the act of discharging it; when an Algerine chief was seen to spring upon the ruins of the parapet, and with impotent rage, to shake his scimitar against the ship.”

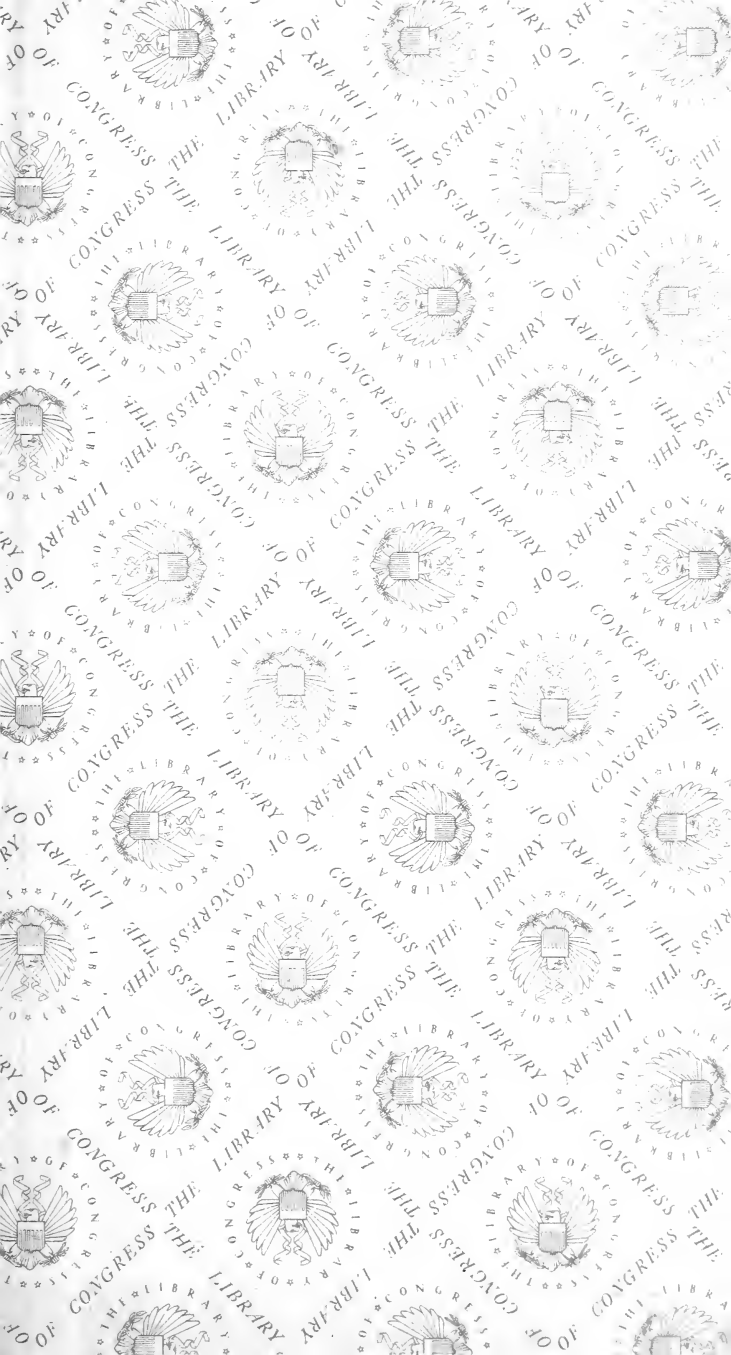
The result was a magnificent victory for the British and their allies the Dutch, who had begged to be allowed to assist in so good a work. From that day Algiers ceased to be a nest of slave-traders and slave-holders. We may just mention that Lord Exmouth, who had all day exhibited the most extraordinary daring, had many narrow escapes. One cannon shot tore away the skirt of his coat; another carried off one of his buttons, and a third smashed his spectacles. He was wounded in the face, the thigh, and the fingers, but, fortunately, not badly.

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